NOW AND THEN

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services/
Institute for Appalachian Affairs

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3 FALL, 1985

Louise Boyle

WOPI Jamboree, circa 1942. [A.P. and Maybelle Carter, center, front row]. Courtesy Paul Culp, WOPI.

APPALACHIAN MUSIC

FROM THE EDITOR

Fred Waage

Now and Then begins its second year of publication with this special double issue, a remarkable harmony of words and pictures presenting Appalachian music of the past and present.

The featured performance in this issue is by Janette Carter, John McCutcheon, Jean Ritchie, Sparky Rucker, Ed Snodderly, and Robin and Linda Williams—lyrics, music and discussions of some of their most memorable songs.

Beside them you will find articles on Appalachian music by Loyal Jones, Charlotte Ross, and Tommy Bledsoe—the last being an intimate portrait of Uncle Charlie Osborne, whose album *Relics and Treasures* has just been released by June Appal Records, with support from the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services (and is reviewed in this issue by Charles Wolfe).

In addition, Pat Arnow contributes an interview with Margaret Moore, preserver of Appalachian music and traditions; Joyce Duncan, a photo essay on the Old Time Fiddlers' Convention; and Rubye Fowler, a striking memoir of her grandmother as an organist and performer of traditional spirituals.

You will find interleaved in this issue an application for membership in the Friends of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services; the different categories of membership include subscriptions to *Now and Then*, which in the interest of becoming self-sustaining, will be distributed on a subscription basis following this issue. I hope you will support *Now and Then* by becoming a friend of CASS. If you do, you may expect to receive issues of *Now and Then*, over the next two years, devoted to the following themes: Black Appalachians (Winter 1986), Appalachian Homecoming (Spring 1986), Cherokees (Fall 1986), Appalachian Childhoods (Winter 1987), and The World of the Appalachian Writer (Spring 1987).

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Richard Blaustein

It's interesting to consider the relationship between work and play. Just as we were beginning to assemble this issue of *Now and Then*, I took a break from preparing the first annual report of the ETSU Center for Appalachian Studies and Services to oversee the judging of the tenth annual Oldtime Fiddlers Contest in Mountain City, Tennessee.

From 3:30 in the afternoon until midnight, my fellow judges and I listened to and evaluated fiddlers, banjo pickers, guitarists, string bands, folksingers, performers on the dulcimer, autoharp, and bass fiddle. It wasn't an easy job to assign numerical values to the efforts of these performers, especially the finalists, whose playing was smooth, strong, and soulful.

People unfamiliar with Appalachian musicians or oldtime fiddle contests would be surprised by the formality and seriousness of these competitions; they might expect them to be wilder, woolier, and considerably less structured. But the truth of the matter is that these Appalachian musicians take their music seriously; theirs is an esthetic built upon skill and precision as well as soul and expression. The highest compliment one mountain musician can pay another is to say, "You've done a good job on that!" Showboating or clowning doesn't carry much weight with them, but they do recognize and appreciate a job well done, whether it's preparing a tobacco bed, repairing a car, or playing a fiddle tune.

As I tabulated the score sheets of the other judges, I was struck by the similarity between the job I was doing now and what I had been doing all the previous week: reviewing and enumerating the accomplishments of the Center's faculty, fellows, and staff.

Numbers do not tell the whole story, of course, but I am proud enough of the accomplishments of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services to want to share some of them with you. We initiated the CASS Fellowship program in July, 1984; by the end of this past fiscal year, we had succeeded in awarding 22 fellowships to outstanding regional scholars, artists, and performers, totaling some forty-seven thousand dollars. I am particularly pleased to note that five of these fellows are distinguished alumni of ETSU: Clifford Boyd, who supervised an archaeological survey of the Tipton-Haynes Historic Farm; Ken Murray, a photojournalist whose *Portrait of Appalachia* will be published later this year by the Appalachian Consortium Press; Nellie McNeil and Joyce Squibb, whose high school anthology in Appalachian literature, *Footprints on the Mountain*, will also be published by the Appalachian Consortium Press; and Tom Bledsoe, whose documentation of the music and story-telling of 94-year old Uncle Charlie Osborne of Russell County, Virginia is described in this issue.

Our service to the Appalachian Studies profession also increased during this year: Dr. Charlotte Ross was elected to the executive boards of the Appalachian Studies Conference and the Appalachian Writers Association; Dr. Ellen Garrison, director of the Archives of Appalachia, was named treasurer of the Appalachian Conference; Helen Roseberry, director of the B. Carroll Reece Museum, was elected chairperson the program committee of the 1987 Appalachian Studies Conference, which will be held at ETSU; and Dr. Emmett Essin of the ETSU department of history is the new chairperson of the executive board of the Appalachian Consortium. Otherwise, CASS succeeded in meeting or exceeding the productivity target figures established for us by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the State Board of Regents.

We have good reason to be proud of these accomplishments, but as I said, numbers do not tell the whole story. We have come a long way in a short time but we still have a long way to go. To support this program we are faced with the necessity of raising nearly a half million dollars in matching funds over these next four years. Consequently, I am urging all of you who have been reading and enjoying *Now and Then* to help subsidize the cost of this publication by becoming a Friend of CASS.

Basic membership will cover printing costs; larger contributions will make it possible for us to continue supporting the work of distinguished Appalachian scholars and artists through the CASS Fellowship program. Once again, the potential has always been here: the challenge is to make it a vivid reality. Help us grow.

FROM THE CENTER
Fellows of the Center, Fall 1985

Clifford Boyd — "A Survey of the Tipton-Haynes Historic Site, Johnson City, Washington County, Tennessee"

Clifford Boyd, a doctorate candidate in Anthropology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, conducted an intensive archaeological survey of the Tipton-Haynes Historic Site from July 8 to August 9, 1985. This survey also took the form of a field course for East Tennessee State University Anthropology students. The site has never before been subjected to a professional survey; this one involved reconnaissance, topographic mapping, core sampling based on a 15 meter grid, and determination of the plowzone. The participating students were introduced to archaeological field techniques, artifact typology and analysis, cultural resource management, and prehistoric culture history of Tennessee. Clifford Boyd, a graduate of East Tennessee State University, is a recipient of The Extraordinary Professional Promise Award of the UT Anthropology Department and of an NSF Doctoral Dissertation Grant.

Douglas P. Dotterweich — "Disseminating Socio-Economic Data on Upper East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia

Dr. Dotterweich, Assistant Professor of Economics at East Tennessee State University, with the assistance of ETSU's Bureau of Business and Economic Research, will publish and disseminate socio-economic data for Upper East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia. County level economic fact sheets will be produced annually and distributed without charge to individuals and agencies in the area. Dr. Dotterweich received the Ph.D. in Urban/Regional Economics from the University of Delaware in 1978.

Margaret Gregg — "A Heritage Exhibition from Washington County Tennessee Homecoming '86"

Artist Margaret Gregg has produced three original art works that present specific historical themes in Washington County appropriate for Homecoming '86. These works were done in traditional folk modes including quilting, patchwork, and embroidery. The themes of the works are: Black history, embodied in the Bethel Christian Church and congregation, Jonesborough; environmental concerns, in the Embreeville area on the Nolichucky River, as remembered by the Bumpass Cove Citizen's group; and the Sulphur Springs Camp Meeting as remembered by the women's groups who have been "meeting" for the last 100 years.

Judith Hammond — "Court-Appointed Special Advocate System (CASA) for Upper East Tennessee"

The program, pioneered by Dr. Hammond, Associate Professor of Sociology at East Tennessee State University, will establish a CASA program for victims of child abuse and neglect in the area. Since there are no such programs supported by the courts themselves in East Tennessee, this program will be University-based, and will draw on the resources of ETSU, including the College of Medicine, and the Center of Excellence in Early Childhood Learning and Development. It will be staffed by trained volunteer advocates.

Katherine S. Knudsen — "A Hard Row to Hoe: White Women and The Tennessee-North Carolina Appalachian Frontier, 1700-1860"

Ms. Knudsen, a graduate student in History at East Tennessee State University, will research the largely unstudied lives of women in early Appalachian settlements. Her resources will include family Bibles, oral histories, diaries, and folklore, which she will use to examine the impact of the strong, yet soft-hearted women who did much to create the uniqueness and stability of the southeastern Appalachian region.

Thomas D. Lane — "A Critical Biography of Rachel Maddux"

This book length biography of Tennessee writer Rachel Maddux (1912-1983) is being prepared by Dr. Thomas D. Lane, Associate Professor of English at East Tennessee State University. Dr. Lane, a native of Kingsport, Tennessee and a recipient of the Ph.D. in English from Texas Christian University, examines Maddux's life and writings in this biography. Her works include five important books and many short stories and articles.

Margaret M. Moore — "Appalachian Heritage: A One-Person Presentation"

This one-person show links early Appalachian songs, music, toys, and games with brief historical commentaries. It is geared to school audiences and Homecoming '86 programs. In the presentation, Ms. Moore will demonstrate and play the three-string dulcimer; and sing answering-back, courting, and other songs. She will also present traditional Appalachian toys and games. An interview with Ms. Moore appears later in this issue.

Kenneth Murray — "A Portrait of Appalachia"

Mr. Murray, staff photographer of the *Kingsport Times-News*, has completed a photographic essay of rural Appalachia, showing people at home, work, and play. He is preparing a final presentaion of these photographs, taken over a ten-year period, which will take the form both of a book and a traveling expedition of selected prints. The large group of prints from which the ones in the presentations have been selected will be donated to the Archives of Appalachia. "A Portrait of Appalachia" will be published by the Appalachian Consortium Press. Murrary, a native of Kingsport, Tennessee, received the bachelor's degree in Art/Journalism from East Tennessee State University in 1970.

Nellie McNeil and Joyce Squibb — "Footprints On the Mountain: An Anthology of Southern Appalachian Literature"

Ms. McNeil and Ms. Squibb are preparing a secondary school anthology of Southern Appalachian Literature. As well as fiction, poetry, drama and reportage, the anthology will include traditional folkloric material, such as ballads, tales and song lyrics. Themes of the anthology are individualism, the sense of place, the land and its influence on the people, and the family and continuity of traditional values. The volume will be supplemented by archival photographs and a literary map of Appalachia. "Footprints On the Mountain" will be published by the Appalachian Consortium Press. Ms McNeil and Ms. Squibb received both bachelor's and master's degrees from East Tennessee State University and are highly active in regional, historical, and cultural preservation activities.

FROM THE MUSEUM

Helen Roseberry

Music is well represented in the collections and activities of the B. Carroll Reece Museum. During the school year, the Frontier Gallery, which includes a log cabin and covered wagon, provides a colorful setting for the Museum's mini-concerts. Featured performers have included Jim Miller, hammered dulcimer maker and player from Hampton, Tennessee, Margaret Moore, ballad singer, and Reverend R. G. Tarleton of Greeneville, Tennessee, who gave a presentation on shape-note harmony. Some of the musicians scheduled to appear at the Reece Museum this year include the Dixie Dewdrops, an oldtime mountain stringband from upper East Tennessee, and Bill Clifton, renowned oldtime country singer from Medota, Virginia.

Local musicians are also much in evidence at the Reece Museum's annual fall and spring events, Family Day, and the Homefolks Festival, which is co-sponsored with the Institute for Appalachian Affairs and the ETSU Campus Activities Board. Notable performers who have appeared at Family Day and the Homefolks Festival include Jack Tottle and the ETSU Bluegrass Band, the Roan Mountain Hilltoppers, The Corklickers, T. N. Garland, Cord and Ruby McConnell, Ed Snodderly, and CASS Fellows Tommy Bledsoe and Anndrena Belcher. Both events are free to the public.

The Museum also has an interesting collection of musical instruments, music boxes and early phonographs, housed in the Music Gallery, most of which were donated by Dr. Nat Winston, a Johnson City native and traditional music enthusiast. In addition to several locally-made fiddles, banjos and ducimers, this collection also includes a variety of disk and paper roll music boxes and a working Edison hill-and-dale record player. The Museum is eager to obtain other examples of musical instruments used in the Appalachian region, whether these are folk instruments produced by local craftspeople or commercially manufactured items like the Goulding and Dalmaine pianoforte from the Rotherwood Mansion in Kingsport, recently added to the collection. The long-term goal of the Reece Museum's music collection is to provide students and visitors with a comprehensive, well-balanced picture of the development of musical life and technology in the area. Individuals who would like to donate or loan musical items to the Museum should contact the Director, Helen Roseberry.

For further information concerning the activities of the B. Carroll Reece Museum, telephone (615) 929-4392 or 929-4283. The Museum Galleries are open weekdays 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. with mornings available for guided tours. Weekend hours are 1 - 5 p.m. Office hours are 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

ETSU Folk Festival poster, Featuring Margaret Moore with dulcimer. Courtesy Margaret Moore.

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF APPALACHIA

Music Resources

The Archives contain a number of audio/visual resources for the study of traditional Appalachian music.

The most significant resource is the Thomas G. Burton—Ambrose N. Manning Collection, which contains nearly four hundred hours of recordings. Included are hymns, gospel singing and choral services; folksongs with diverse accompaniments—dulcimer, guitar, autoharp, fiddle, etc; childrens' songs and ballads; games and dance songs; and recordings of performances at the the ETSU Folk Festival, held from 1968-70.

The Richard Blaustein Collection contains photographs, tapes, news clippings, correspondence, and publications, with material dating from 1927 to 1981. As well as covering the history of country music in the Southern Appalachians, this material includes documentation of the Old Time Country Radio Reunion, directed by Dr. Blaustein since 1979, and audio/video tapes and records relating to country music in general and the Radio Reunion in particular.

Broadside Television, Inc., an experimental video/television production company active in Johnson City from 1973-77, created a remarkable series of field videos of Appalachian artists and craftspeople. These tapes, now in the Archives, include numerous intriguing musical performances, such as Grandpa Jones at the A. P. Carter Store, the Ralph Stanley Memorial Bluegrass Festival, and the Fiddlin' Powers Family, pioneering Southern Appalachian recording artists of the 1920's.

The WETS-FM Collection consists primarily of about 500 reel-to-reel and cassette tapes, used on programs by the public broadcasting station at ETSU between 1977 and 1983. The collection includes a significant number of taped interviews, and performances of diverse musicians, as well as tapes of local music festivals.

The Appalachian Preaching Mission Collection contains tapes of the Johnson City preaching mission from 1958 to 1977. As well as sermons, the tapes include musical performances by choirs and individuals.

The extensive Burton-Manning and Broadside Television Collections are itemized on a detailed and indexed finding list available in an Archives publication, *Appalachian Folk Culture and Regional History: A Guide to Audio and Video Recordings Available from the Archives of Appalachia.*

Relics and Treasure: A Perspective on Charlie Osborne

Tommy Bledsoe

Tom Bledsoe and Uncle Charlie Osborne.

October 17, 1984 was the offical beginning of my project, under a grant from the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, to record an album featuring Charlie Nelson Osborne, of Russell County, Virginia. This project was actually begun over 94 years ago, when Charlie was born on December 26, 1890. As the third child born to Charlie Cowan and Ellen Barton Osborne, he grew up hearing his father play fiddle and banjo. Sometimes the music was made for visiting neighbors or for community dances, but usually the music signaled the end of a day's work on the Osborne farm, as the shadows enveloped the Osborne cabin.

As a teenager, Charlie, also known as Uncle Charlie, made his first banjo from the willow and cedar trees growing along the banks of Copper Creek. With a cat-skin head and a 10¢ set of storebought strings, it was fitted for use to join in the family band. He and his brothers played regularly with Cowan, and occasionally with other musicians who visited the Osbornes.

After the death of his mother in 1905, Uncle Charlie started playing the fiddle. His father did not allow the children to play his instrument, probably to protect it from damage. Charlie's curiosity overcame his caution, and he started practicing tunes and songs on the fiddle, unknown to Cowan. By the time Cowan discovered his son's transgression, Charlie was accomplished enough to prompt the father to allow him to play for people who stopped by for a tune: "I'm going to turn it over to Charlie and let him play for ye'. He can beat me."

I met Uncle Charlie when he was 85 years old. He had walked three miles from his home to visit a crippled neighbor, whom I was also visiting. I was impressed with his vitality, humor and gentle manner. Shortly thereafter, I visited him at his home and we played music together. I came to view Uncle Charlie as a living treasure: first as a friend, and later as a dynamic link with a period of history that saw music and culture as direct products of human interaction and oral communication.

There were several reasons why I wanted to produce a musical and historic persepctive on Charlie Osborne, not the least of which was that he is an accomplished singer and fiddler. His drive, energy and repertoire are perfectly suited for translation to a recording. Beyond that, however, is his age. At 94, Uncle Charlie exemplifies the music popular at the turn of the century, and he is probably the most exciting performer of these songs since Fiddlin' John Carson. Even more significant in a musicological sense is the source and style of his store of songs, tunes, and stories. He learned most of his material directly from his father. Some of these tunes had been brought to the country by their ancestors, and had undergone a transformation from straight Anglo-style to the Anglo-Afro-Native style that can be heard in almost all Appalachian folk music. Other songs had been introduced to the popular culture by itinerant musicians or minstrels who were active in the mid-1800s, and still others had come through cultural interchange that occurred between the end of the Civil War and the time when coal mines in central Appalachia were opened. All of these influences had made their impressions prior to Charlie's birth, and the resulting musical styles had stabilized before he began playing. His repertoire was gained in a pretty constant musical environment. He learned from radios, phonographs and popular musicians of the day, but by that time he was almost forty years old and his own style was firmly set.

Another factor that helped shape his distinct style is that he is left-handed. His father was right-handed, and played a standard violin. When he started playing, young Charlie was faced with a dilemma: should he restring his fathers' fiddle (out of the question considering the circumstances), to play right-handed, or should he reverse the instrument and play southpaw? Charlie chose the latter, and his unique across-the-basses bowing contributes to his singular sound. Whether this sound is due solely to this orientation, or whether Cowan played the tunes in a like manner, is moot. On some tunes Uncles Charlie's style seems to get a fuller sound, probably because different drones are used.

Uncle Charlie has spent most of his life within two or three miles of his birthplace. This is partly due to the condition of transportation in this area of Southwest Virginia, but in Charlie's case it was influenced by an event that transpired in 1911. He suffered a gunshot wound to his left temple that severly impaired his vision. He was totally blinded in his left eye, and lost much of the vision in his right eye. (He still carries a .32 caliber bullet in his head.) Although this did not prevent him from farming for his living, and raising, with his wife, Clara, eight children, it did restrict travel outside his community. This visual handicap probably served to keep his musical style stable, and it may have improved his execution of the material by allowing him more time for practice.

Uncle Charlie has an astounding memory for song verses, and he sings many songs that exist elsewhere only as instrumental melodies. Examples are "Ida Red", "Turkey Buzzard", and "Old Joe Clark". He learned some obscure songs and ditties, fragments (that have not appeared in other collections)from his grandfather, Creed Barton. Some of his father's material is rare or previously uncollected: "Georgia Row", "Old Aunt Katy (There's a Bug On Me)". Even more significant than his knowing the song verses is the sensitivity that Uncle Charlie exhibits by his recognition of situations where the words are inappropriate. He will not sing racially insulting songs or off-color songs in public, even though he learned them naturally and innocently. This reinforces my belief that even performers of traditional material need to recognize changing social values, and many actually do so.

The Project

The collection of recordings and interviews required a number of sessions with Uncle Charlie. I was familiar with his repertoire, and we came to an agreement on what material we would attempt to record. Knowing as I did that Uncle Charlie had other songs that I had not heard in our eight year friendship, I was flexible, and we changed our program to record some material that would not be included on the record.

The first recording session was done before the project actually ever started, in February of 1984. At that time I arranged for the two of us to go into Minor Blue Studio, in Gate City, Virginia. On that snowy evening we recorded 16 songs with fiddle, vocal and guitar. I was interested in getting a quality recording of Uncle Charlie, but financial consideration prevented any further steps.

The first official session was on October 17, 1984, at Maggard Sound Studios in Big Stone Gap, Virginia. I had received notice that funding was forthcoming from the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, and June Appal recordings, of Whitesburg, Kentucky, had agreed to release the record. At this session Uncle Charlie was accompanied by his son, Johnny Cowan, who was visiting from his home in Baltimore, Maryland. Johnny learned to play banjo as a teenager, and I had heard him play once with his father. The three of us recorded the bulk of the material that is included on the record. The session was loosely structured, the main objective being to achieve a natural and spontaneous product in this most unnatural setting. Except for some initial studio jitters, and technical problems with banjo tone, the session went smoothly. I could have avoided the nervousness by recording Uncle Charlie at his home, but the quality of the recording would have suffered. One field-recorded song is included on the record, partly for comparison, and partly because it was a spontaneous, if not flawless performance. All cuts were recorded "live", with no overdubbing.

Maxine Kenny, a talented photojournalist and editor, helped with the interviews of Uncle Charlie, and was in charge of the photography needed for the project. We conducted an interview and home photo session with Uncle Charlie on November 4th. At that time she was able to get the photographs that appear on the cover and in the booklet/poster that accompanies the albums. Family photos were reproduced by Maxine and were used to complete the photo essay of Charlie. We would have liked to have more old photographs, but a fire at the Osborne home destroyed most of the family collection.

The interview also provided the recording of "Dan Tucker" that is included on the album. It was recorded using lavalier microphones into a Marantz 360 stereo cassette recorder. This selection is fairly typical of Uncle Charlie at home, where many songs are followed by a hearty laugh.

Rich Kirby's follow-up interview in January completed the collection of information, except for bits and pieces that I gleaned over the course of my acquaintance with Uncle Charlie. During Rich's interview/music session, Uncle Charlie shared some previously unheard verses to "John Henry" that emphasize the romantic involvement of John Henry and Julie Ann.

Dr. Richard Blaustein, friend, scholar, musician, and director of the CASS at ETSU, provided invaluable service in researching and compiling informative and comprehensive notes on the album selections. With assistance from Charles Wolfe, professor and music scholar at MTSU, Charles Seemann, a director at the Country Music Foundation Library in Nashville, Tennessee, and Douglas Dorschug, musician and recording engineer, Richard developed an impressive discography and insights into the history of each cut on the album. I later added information from Uncle Charlie concerning his sources.

The final step in the project was to take the bounty of fact and folklore and condense it into a manageable text for inclusion in the booklet/poster that Maxine Kenny and I designed. The resulting package is an attractive and informative pictorial and text that gives context and insight into the popular and folk culture that provides the foundation for the lives of many residents of rural America. The album is a high quality representative sample of music and stories that is sure to make Charlie Osborne everyone's favorite uncle.

Copies of all materials collected under the project will be housed in the Archives of the Appalachian Affairs Institute at East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee. Uncle Charlie Osborne will appear at Mountain Empire Community College Home Crafts Day festival of Traditional Music, Berea, Kentucky, on October 25-27, 1985, and at the Carter Fold Christmas program, Hiltons, Virginia on December 21, 1985. *RELICS AND TREASURE* is a JuneAppal release #049, and is available from JuneAppal Recordings, Box 743, Whitesburg, Kentucky 41858, or from Uncle Charlie Osborne, Route 3, Lebanon, Virginia 24266, or Tom Bledsoe, Route 2, box 275, Gate City, Virginia 24251. It is available on album or cassette.

The Triplett Tragedy: The Topical Ballad As An Instrument of Revenge

Charlotte Ross

All ballads flourish best within their local contexts. Indeed, some ballads are too intensely localized to appeal to the wider audience, and consequently they never travel very far beyond the borders of their native regions. "The Triplett Tragedy" is one such ballad. It may never have been sung in tradition outside of northwestern North Carolina.

The ballad was written in the spring of 1910 by Edmund Miller of the Grassy Creek area of Watauga County. The events which the song chronicles began on Christmas Day 1909 and ended in April of 1910. Apparently the ballad was current throughout the county for the next several years, for one of my informants remembers singing it for a Halloween program at the Bethel schoolhouse "the year before the big war started." However, it was not until the 1966 release of the Folkways album, *The Doc Watson Family*, that the ballad found a wider audience.

In the notes which accompany the album, D. K. Wilgus suggests that the song may have been selected for the album because of the unusual opportunity to record a murder ballad "from the widow of one of the principals." There are two other possible reasons for its selection. First, this is a family record, and Sophronie Miller was Doc Watson's aunt. Second, the "tragedy" consisted of two particularly dramatic murders within one family: one stabbing and one stomping.

THE TRIPLETT TRAGEDY

A horrible sight I'll now relate,
On Yadkin Elk it did take place,
On Christmas morning at nine o'clock,
The people met an awful shock.

At Marshall Triplett's this begun.
The brothers met it seemed in fun.
They drank together all as one,
And then this trouble it begun.

Then Marshall seemed to stand in the rear,
And struck Columbus with the chair.
"There is one thing that I do know
You drink only to save your own."

They met in combat near the barn.
Mrs. Triplett went to stop this wrong.
Columbus stabbed Marshall in the thigh,
And left him on the ground to die.

Then Marshall's wife in great distress
Stayed by her husband while in death.
The children's screams was heard around,
Which did produce a solemn sound.

Then Lum went off to go away (?)
And met Gran Triplett on his way.
At Leroy Triplett's this was said,
Lum said to Gran, "Your father's dead."

Lum said to Gran, "I'll let you know,
I've killed your father at his home.
I'll now surrender up to thee,
You treat me kindly if you please."

Gran said to Lum, "One thing I'll do.
If you killed Father, I'll kill you."
He then beat Lum at a dreadful rate
And made bad bruises on his face.

Gran then took Lum to Watauga Jail.
He went behind the bars to stay.
Those beats and bruises they inflamed,
Which brought Columbus to his grave.

Those brothers sleep in the same graveyard,
Their wives and children's troubled hard,
Their resting place there sure must be,
Till they shall rise at Judgment Day.

The sheriff then went on the round
To see if Granville could be found.
There at his home he did abound
And at that place he was then found.

Sheriff Webb held court up in our town
And sent him on to the chain gang.
For eighteen months he there must stay,
Except the governor hear him pray.

Young men take warning by the case,
Don't use strong drink while in life's race.
Leave all such stuff then far behind,
And your kind parents you should mind.

Ed Miller

The most striking features of "The Triplett Tragedy" are its tight chronological development and its faithful adherence to the reported facts. Miller's text tells the complete story; no element of the narrative is omitted.

McDonald Family String band, Mosheim, Greene County, Tennessee [banjos, A.H. McDonald (b. 1884), A.C. McDonald (b. 1879); fiddles, James McDonald (b. 1843), T.K. McDonald (b. 1882)].

"The Triplett Tragedy" was not Ed Miller's most successful ballad, but it undoubtedly has a more interesting history than any of the more than fifty songs he wrote. Granville Triplett's eighteen-month prison term ended in September of 1911. Soon after his return to Watauga County, he heard about "The Triplett Tragedy." He was so outraged by the song that he posted a notice stating that he would kill anyone who sang it. No one doubted his word, and "The Triplett Tragedy" quickly passed from oral circulation. Only one person persisted in singing the ballad openly;

that was Sophronie Miller (Triplett), the widow of the uncle whom Granville had stomped to death.

For all the days of his life the legendary badman, Granville Triplett, had to walk on the other side of the road with his fists clenched and his ears stopped, while Sophronie stood on her porch and sang "The Triplett Tragedy." He could not kill her although he longed to do so, for her testimony had saved him from the electric chair, and he had given his word that she would not be harmed. There is honor even among madmen.

And Sophronie Miller sang her revenge. She outlived Granville Triplett by many years, and she never stopped singing the ballad. When Sophronie was 86, Ralph Rinzler asked Doc Watson whether there was an old lady in the family who could sing a ballad for the album they were recording. Doc recommended his Aunt Sophronie, thereby extending the Miller family's revenge against the Tripletts.

The Events of the Tragedy

On December 24, 1909, Elk Township was relatively quiet. The women and children were preparing for Christmas. Despite the unrelenting poverty, there were always special meals for Christmas in Triplett. The whole community was busy with festive preparations, for there were plans for a church service and baptizing at the Baptist Church and several large, extended-family dinners within the community.

Seven year-old Olin Miller was very excited by the unusual activity. His father, Preacher Mark Miller, was to lead the Christmas morning service. One incident marred that Christmas Eve for Olin. About 10:00 a.m., Columbus Triplett came to the Miller residence and asked to see Olin's twenty-six-year-old sister, Sophronie. Sophronie was Columbus Triplett's estranged common-law wife; they had just separated for the seventh time. When Sophronie came to the door, Lum asked her to go to the baptizing with him on Christmas morning. She agreed to go if he had not been drinking.

The Miller family was disturbed by his visit and by Sophronie's acceptance of the invitation, for Lum had treated her badly during the four years they had been together. She had worked in an East Texas logging camp cutting cross-ties with Lum and his son. When she tried to leave Texas, he beat her and refused to give her any of the money they had earned together. When she left the camp and took a hotel job to earn money for her ticket home, Lum found her and beat her and took her money. They returned to Elk Township together in 1908, but they had separated again several times. Lum had tried to kill Sophronie on two separate occasions.

After Columbus Triplett left the Miller home, he went to visit his brother, Marshall Triplett. Nearly twenty years separated the two brothers. Marshall was in his early thirities; Lum was nearer fifty. Marshall's second wife, Ida, was baking, and the house was quite warm and full of children. The men went to the barn to talk. Sometime in the early afternoon they went "to a place where whiskey was sold and bought themselves some whiskey with which to celebrate Christmas."

Marshall invited Lum to return on Christmas morning and stay for dinner. Later that afternoon Marshall Triplett passed Mark Miller's house carrying a huge ham on his shoulder. He stopped in the road, called a greeting to Preacher Miller, and asked him to take Christmas dinner with the Triplett family. The Millers agreed to stop by after church on Christmas morning.

December of 1909 was one of the coldest Decembers ever recorded in Northwestern North Carolina. The January 6, 1910 edition of *THE WATAUGA DEMOCRAT* mentioned below-zero temperatures for most of the county.

The geographical features which isolate Triplett normally shield the community from Watauga County's severe weather. The twenty-seven-hundred-foot escarpment, the box-canyon shape of the hills and the thermal updraft protect the community. Snow is as rare in Triplett as in the North Carolina piedmont.

In the early hours of Christmas morning, snow fell on Triplett. There were two inches of snow on the ground when Columbus reached his brother's house at eight that morning, and Marshall's brood of children was clamoring to be allowed outside for a snowball fight. While the children played in the yard, Ida Triplett cooked their Christmas dinner. Lum and Marshall sat by the window talking and drinking whiskey.

There is endless speculation about what happened next. The Miller family, Sophronie's relatives, wondered whether Lum Triplett became incensed with his brother because Marshall had invited Preacher Miller to dinner. There was much ill will between Lum and his father-in-law. Although Lum had intended to attend Miller's church that morning, he may not have wanted to break bread with Miller.

Olin Miller says that his brother-in-law, Lum, was a mean man and a meaner drunk and that Lum always attacked Sophronie when he drank. He also says that the quarrel began because "Columbus Triplett was the sort of man who would drink another man's whiskey to save his own." Olin stoutly defends Marshall Triplett's character, saying that his father, the preacher, thought the world of Marshall Triplett and had intended to eat Christmas dinner with him. In the Miller version of the tragedy, Columbus was at fault, and Marshall was the victim.

Only one of the seven children who played in the snow at Marshall Triplett's house that Christmas morning is still living. However, Marshall's daughter, Mary Triplett, was a willing informant. Her version of the tragedy is similar to Olin Miller's. Mary was nine that day, and she remembers that her mother knelt in the snow to hold her father's head as he lay dying. All of the children, panic-stricken and screaming, ran up and down the yard.

The Watson version of the tragedy is given in the notes accompanying *The Doc Watson Family*. In this version, a pleasant Columbus went to his brother's home with a gift of whiskey for Ida. Ida gave Lum a drink from the jug which he had given her, and Marshall became so angry that he hit Lum with a chair, knocking him off of the porch. Marshall supposedly said, "you are drinking my whiskey to save your own." Lum then peacefully left the house and walked away. However, he changed his mind and walked back through Marshall's barnyard, intending to go past the house in the other direction. His brother Marshall saw him pass and ran out to attack him. Marshall threw Lum to the ground and tried to strangle him. Lum panicked and stabbed Marshall in the thigh, cutting his femoral artery. Marshall bled to death within three minutes. In the Watson version, Marshall was the aggressor, and Lum killed him in self-defense. Willard Watson, who gave me this version of the tragedy, is Marshall Triplett's grandson.

After Marshall died, Lum met Marshall's son, Granville Triplett, on the path; Granville was a Watauga County deputy sheriff. Lum told Granville that he had killed his (Granville's) father in self-defense and would surrender if he could be assured to fair treatment. Granville was understandably upset about his father's death, and he refused to take his Uncle Lum into custody. Instead, he began to beat him.

The Watsons say that Lum refused to fight back and begged for mercy. Granville threw the older man to the ground and began to

stomp him. No one knows why Granville did not kill Lum on the spot. Perhaps he realized that witnesses were gathering and feared for his job. Perhaps he knew that Lum was already mortally wounded.

All of this had happened by 10:00 a.m. on Christmas morning. At her father's church, Sophronie heard that her husband, Lum, had killed his brother. She did not know where Lum had gone or what had happened to him. When the Millers left church that morning, Preacher Miller went to comfort Marshall's widow, but Sophronie and her little brother, Olin, went home. At noon, Granville Triplett came walking though the Millers' yard with Lum staggering along beside him. Seven-year-old Olin and Sophronie ran out into the yard. Even then, Olin Miller had no reason to love his brother-in-law, but Lum's condition moved him to pity

> My Daddy lived in a house in that bottom over there, and around noon, on Christmas day in the morning, he come bringing Lum through there. And he was stomped! Tack prints and deep nail-cuts in his face—deep holes from them A.A. Cutter's boots. And his liver was stomped clean in two! He couldn't even stand up—and him with that liver stomped in two—and walked all the way to Boone, Granville prodding him every step, and he put him in jail, and he died... Now you think about that! Walked all the way to Boone. Lived twenty-one days and died.

Only Olin Miller knows what passed between Sophronie and Granville when she saw Lum's condition, and Olin has never told. It is certain that something happened, for Granville threatened Sophronie's life. After he had marched his Uncle Lum the twelve miles to Watauga Jail, Granville spent that night in Boone. He did not, at first, tell the sheriff that he was responsible for Lum's condition, and Lum did not tell it either. Later the tales bagan to come up the mountain from Triplett to Boone.

When Granville Triplett returned to Elk, he had a club made at his father's house; he said he intended to use it to kill Sophronie Miller. However, Granville's wife sent Sophronie a warning, and all the Millers closed ranks around her. Olin says that the family was on the alert and thought that there would be more killings, but events in Boone precluded further troubles in Triplett.

Postcard, circa 1900. Courtesy Mildred Kozsuch.

The Aftermath

Perhaps Sophronie would have prevailed against her family and claimed her estranged husband's body in other, more normal circumstances, but nothing was normal in Triplett in January of 1910. The community was an armed camp, and the usually peaceable Millers were the focus of hostility. Marshall Triplett's death at the hands of Sophronie's husband and Sophronie's altercation with Granville over his treatment of Lum had undermined the Millers' standing in the community. The day Lum died, Sophronie was under heavy guard, for her family was expecting an attack from Granville Triplett. The Millers were operating under a siege mentality; they expected the fighting to begin at any moment. Olin says that his older brothers were "on the look out," and that they "stayed close to the ammunition."

So, none of the Tripletts and none of the Millers claimed Lum's body. John Grimes of Boone loaded Lum's coffin onto a wagon and drove it to the edge of the escarpement; a Mr. Cruikshank from Elk township lowered the coffin down Jak's Mountain with a rope and a sled. The sled pulled into Triplett at 9:00 p.m. on January 18. Lum Triplett was buried quickly and without ceremony in the Rhymer Cemetery. His final resting place is only a few yards from that of his brother, Marshall.

When Lum died, Sheriff Webb ordered his deputy, Granville Triplett, to report to Boone for questioning. Granville refused; he sent word to Sheriff Webb that anyone coming to arrest him "had better bring his winding sheet." Knowing that he could never arrest Granville, Sheriff Webb requested federal assistance.

U. S. Deputy Marshall Dave Reagan was one of the most famous lawmen in the South at that time; he had never failed to get his man. Reagan stalked Granville Triplett stealthily; he lay in a bedroll on the frozen mountainside for several days watching the house through a telescope. Just before dawn on February 4, he made his move.

There was no outhouse at the Triplett residence, so Granville went into the weeds near the barn each morning before dawn. That fateful morning Granville scanned the horizon carefully, moved into the overgrown field, laid down his rifle, dropped his pants and squatted. Reagan stepped around the corner of the barn with his rifle in his hand and said, "I'm Dave Reagan, and I've brought your winding sheet." Triplett surrendered.

Granville Triplett's arrest meant that Sophronie Miller was no longer in imminent peril. However, her father realized that a harsh verdict against Granville might bring the wrath of the Tripletts down on Sophronie. When his daughter received her subpoena, Mark Miller went to Watauga Jail to strike a desperate bargain.

Olin Miller says that his father talked "long and hard" to Granville Triplett, and at last they struck a bargain. Granville Triplett swore never to harm Sophronie. She told the jury that Lum had suffered from heart troubles and "blackouts" and that he might have died from natural causes!

Apparently the Millers were not the only people who feared the Tripletts, for the jury used Sophronie's testimony as an excuse for reducing the charges against Granville, and the prosecutor withheld Lum Triplett's autopsy report. The report stated that Lum died of a ruptured liver.

Granville Triplett served eighteen brutal months in Captain Blackwelder's chain gang. All his life he remained overbearing, dangerous and a bully. People down on Elk say that Granville always walked with a swagger and carried a big stick. Ora Greer Watson, Willard's wife, "was afeared to meet him in the road." People from that community know that Granville killed again; Lum Triplett was not his last victim. However, Granville was never again arrested. He died in 1962 as he had lived: a legendary badman whom all the people feared.

Except, of course, Sophronie Miller, who stood on her porch and sang "The Triplett Tragedy"as Granville passed by on the other side of the road. When Sophronie died in a local rest home in 1976, she was 91. For more than sixty years she had sung her revenge against the Tripletts.

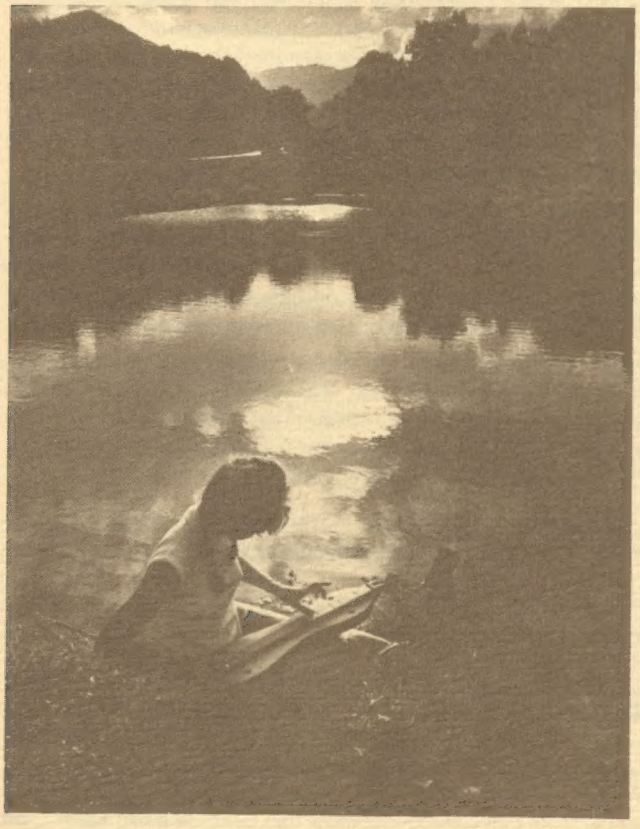
A Sound From The Past

Pat Arnow

Margaret Moore can remember the first time she performed. She was only two years old. "They set me on a table and put a black wig on me. 'Hoover, Hoover, he's the man! I can't vote but Daddy can. Smith, Smith, he's no good. Chop him up for kindling wood.'"

In a comfortable den in her home in Johnson City, she talks about how she has sung and played for people from the time she was growing up in the mountains of North Carolina to now—performing for local groups and East Tennessee school children.

Keeping musical traditions alive is something Margaret Moore has been doing for most of her fifty-nine years. Born in Avery County, North Carolina, Margaret and her husband William W. Moore now live in Johnson City, Tennessee. This fall, through the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University, she is conducting programs for children in area schools; Margaret shows the children handmade folk toys, plays her dulcimer, sings the old ballads and teaches them old-fashioned play party games. While Margaret loves to share her mountain heritage, her background is by no means narrow and her present life is in no way old-fashioned. In fact, she sometimes worries that the 1980's sportswear she likes does not convey the mountain ambiance that her audiences might expect.



Margaret Moore playing dulcimer, North Carolina, Late 60's. Courtesy Margaret Moore.

The lively lady with her delicate complexion sprinkles her conversation with songs. She remembers a happy childhood full of every kind of music, an unexpected diversity for one who grew up in a tiny mountain village. "Cranberry was a very cosmopolitan little town," she explains proudly. Her mother, who is now 80 and still living in Cranberry, often talks about the days when Cranberry was a pretty little town completely owned by the Cranberry Iron and Coal Company.

In the early years of this century, Cranberry, North Carolina was a booming mining town, with rows of neatly-kept houses. If residents of the front row of houses didn't keep their lawns mowed, the company insisted they move to a less conspicious row. The children went to a company-built school and were treated for illnesses at no charge by a company doctor. The one church in town was built on land donated by the company.

By the time Margaret was growing up, the mine had closed, so the company swimming pool and tennis courts were no longer open. But the Cranberry Union Church was still attended by the town residents with five different Christian denominations holding services on alternating Sundays.

The Sunday school was non-denominational. "Every Baptist, Methodist, Christian, Presbyterian and Holiness came to Sunday school," says Margaret. Until she was nearly grown, she did not realize that there was any difference between the religions.

Church wasn't the only place where the children of Cranberry learned music. Margaret fondly recalls her school music teacher, Geraldine Redmond Hampton. This teacher did not have the children singing folk songs or mountain songs. She produced a full-scale operetta every year, using the talents of every child who wanted to have a part.

It was from some of her classmates—the children who lived on the mountainsides surrounding Cranberry—that Margaret learned the haunting mountain melodies and country ballads that she most often sings for audiences now. "Frances McKenny was a skinny pale little girl and she liked to sing," Moore recalls. "she'd twist like this and she'd sing 'Why do you treat me as if I was only a friend . . . I will be gone when you read this last letter from me,'" And she remembers Bobby Taylor and Hurley Davis singing, "Oh the days are so long, and weeks are so sad . . . prepare me oh Lord, to sail on that ship, that ship is sailing now."

Margaret is as happy to recall songs that she heard on the radio from "Your Hit Parade" as the old mountain melodies and hymns. Her voice taking on a different tone, she lightly sings a few lines from "Elmer's Tune."

When she sings the old ballads her voice takes on a wavering, haunting sound. She says that in her head is the voice of the person who taught her those melodies. When she sings the songs of her past she is turning the pages of an aural scrapbook, presenting as vivid an image as anyone turning the pages of a family album.

Specializing in mountain music and playing the dulcimer are happenstance, she says, inspired by the interest of a remarkable woman, Jean Thomas, the "Traipsin' Woman" of Ashland, Kentucky.

Jean Thomas's production, the American Folksong Festival, was a popular June event from 1932 to 1972. At its height in 1938 it drew a crowd of 20,000. The festival was a day-long pageant with costumed performers who sang, danced and told stories. The audience came from all over the country to witness the historical panorama unfold in front of a windowless log cabin schoolhouse in an Ashland pasture.

American Folk Song Festival [Margaret Moore, Pleaz Mobley (standing), Jean Thomas (seated)]. Courtesy Margaret Moore.

When she was 16, Margaret saw her first Folk Festival. She remembers being especially impressed when she heard Pleaz Mobley from Manchester, Kentucky, singing "Barbry Allen"—"with his black curls and his beat-up guitar with holes in it. It was raining on him, but he just smiled like an angel. That day, 'Barbry Allen' was my favorite song."

As a young visitor to the Folk festival, Margaret never imagined that she would be one of the troupe. Just a few years later, when she was living nearby, in Huntington, West Virginia, she was introduced to the dynamic, tiny Traipsin' Woman by a mutual friend. The women became friends, and for the next 15 years, Margaret was Jean Thomas's companion, assistant, and a performer at the annual Festival.

Jean Thomas believed that mountain music was directly inherited from Elizabethan England, often more purely Elizabethan than any music that could be found in the British Isles at that time. To preserve the music and customs that she had discovered in her travels through the region, she produced and directed the festival with the utmost precision. This formal scripting would preserve the mountain traditions in a pure form, she believed. It would be an authentic living history. "It was authentic to her," says Margaret judiciously. "It was the way she heard it."

American Folk Song Festival, 1964. Courtesy Margaret Moore.

Margaret recalls how the Traipsin' Woman insisted upon her version of authenticity when the performers rehearsed the dances. "During the square dancing we all had the tendency to wave our arms up and down and lift our feet off the floor. She really would crack our little heads for that. She would say 'That is not the way they did it. You girls are very uninhibited, but these children were not. And, not only that, these children listened to their parents. If their parents said you may step the tune in a certain way, they did it.' So she was very strict, and sometimes when under pressure, very sharp."

According to Margaret, every year there were performers who would be so offended by Jean Thomas's crotchety behavior that they would swear they would never again perform at the festival. Yet they returned year after year. The Traipsin' Woman's tenacity always brought them back.

Jean Thomas was also responsible for Margaret Moore's dulcimer playing. Before the national folk music revival of the late 1950's the dulcimer was a rare instrument, in a decline, probably close to dying out. Growing up in Cranberry, Margaret never saw a dulcimer and her mother said that she had only seen one, an instrument that an uncle had built around the turn of the century. In the early fifties, when she was living in Warsaw, Indiana, Margaret received an unexpected package: "By railway Express arrived a long black box and it was the dulcimer from Jean Thomas. She sent me 'Down In The Valley' a turkey quill, and the linsey-woolsey dress that was dyed with mulberry juice with the antique buttons from her mother's button string." Jean Thomas explained that Aunt Rosie Day, who had always played the dulcimer at the festival, was sick with cancer. She wanted the young performer to learn the instrument.

Margaret Moore playing dulcimer, American Folk Song Festival, late 60's. Courtesy Margaret Moore.

Margaret was not sure she'd be able to do it. The only instruction she had was the music to "Down In The Valley" marked with numbers indicating which fret to play. "It looked hard", said Margaret. "But I sat on that floor in Warsaw, Indiana, and I played 'Down In The Valley' until everyone went out of their minds." Finally, she learned the song and thereafter she played the dulcimer at the festival every year. In 1963 she authored one of the first instruction books for the dulcimer after a chance meeting with Gus Schirmer, president of the Boston Music Company. *How To Play The Dulcimer* by Margaret Winters (her former name) is still in print today, though the price has gone from a dollar and quarter

Margaret Moore, toy demonstration, 1985.

to two dollars and seventy five cents. The notation Margaret used was the same numbering system for the frets that Jean Thomas had marked for her on "Down In The Valley."

Jean Thomas hoped that Margaret would follow in her footsteps. "She would say from the stage, 'My assistant and successor.'" The dulcimer player protested to her mentor that she didn't feel she could take on that responsibility. Organizing the festival was an enormous job. As soon as the day-long event ended the Traipsin' Woman would start getting out publicity on the next year's festival.

The Traipsin' Woman's American Folksong Festival ceased production in 1972 when Jean Thomas retired. Today the legacy of Jean Thomas is contained in a museum in Ashland, Kentucky, and in the memories of old friends like Margaret Moore. Margaret fondly remembers Jean Thomas' storytelling abilities and her quick wit. "She was a funny critter. And she could turn an Elizabethan phrase."

After leaving Jean Thomas, Margaret lived in a number of places in and out of Appalachia: Texas, California, Florida, Indiana, and West Virginia; during the sixties she ran a handmade crafts store, Wee Loch, in Elk Park, North Carolina. There she sold mountain dulcimers made by local craftspeople, and handmade toys and instruments.

Margaret is still demonstrating her toys and instruments today, except now her customers are East Tennessee school children. Her classroom visits have been enthusiastically received by students and teachers alike, and she's looking forward to playing an active part in community heritage celebrations during Tennessee Homecoming '86. In her modern clothes and with her diverse background, Margaret Moore might not seem to be the "authentic" ministrel that the Traipsin' Woman (and other musical purists) had in mind to be a guardian of tradition. But Margaret Moore's performances are probably a more accurate reflection of Appalachian musical traditions than a scripted Elizabethan fantasy. And it's a pleasant reality.

The Role of Bascom Lamar Lunsford in the Rediscovery of Traditional American Music

Loyal Jones

To use a mountain saying, Bascom Lamar Lunsford would cross hell on a rotten rail to get a folk song. But folk songs were only a part of his calling and of the magic that he sought and used for a larger pupose. Across that precarious rail, Lunsford viewed Appalachian culture and identity that were being uprooted by the irrevocable push of progress.

The people of the Southern Appalachian Mountains are among the most old-fashioned and thus traditional in the country. The great treasure of ballads, songs and tales that the settlers brought from the British Isles and the continent of Europe was kept alive by their offspring to a degree rarely found elsewhere in the country. By the time Lunsford reached adulthood, however, this devotion to traditional ways had begun to weaken, especially among the progressive folk who were intrigued by new ways, and Lunsford made it his job to rekindle new interest and respect for the old traditions. Long before this mission was revealed to him, though, he had determined to learn all he could about the folk arts and ways of his people. Thus Lunsford became a walking library of Appalachian arts. As a performer, he reflected the breadth of Appalachian folk traditions.

Bascom Lamar Lunsford. Courtesy Loyal Jones.

He was a remarkable performer, recording more than 300 songs, tunes and tales from memory for posterity. But more importantly, to him, he sought to present what he considered to be the best of mountain performers to a public that was growing away from the old folk traditions. The vehicle he chose was the song and dance festival, the first of which he began in 1928 and out of which other festivals grew throughout the country. His Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, still going strong in Asheville, North Carolina, is perhaps his greatest monument.

He was an engaging and energetic man, and he achieved most of what he wanted to in his busy ninety-one years. And in doing so, he became a legend.

Lunsford was born in the heart of his beloved Blue ridge mountains, at Mars Hill, Madison County, North Carolina, on March 21, 1882. He was later to call Madison County "the last stand of the natural people." It was, and remains, a rural county with numerous interrelated families who sang the old ballads, told folk tales, played the fiddle and banjo, danced and held on to other traditional ways of working, worshipping and coping with the problems of living. But just a few miles south of Madison, in Buncombe County, was Asheville, which had already developed as a shipping and trade center and was beginning to hawk the virtues of its healthy climate. The first railroad was completed to Asheville the year before Bascom was born. It already had real streets and brick buildings, several hotels, a public library and was in the process of laying water and sewer lines. As people came out of the solitude of the rural counties surrounding Asheville to trade, they came into contact with different kinds of people from the Lowland South or the North who spoke optimistically of the future and who had invested accordingly, who described progress almost in religious tones and dreamed of wealth as a sure reward for the faith they held in the future. Eventually many country people moved to Asheville, like the Joyners in Thomas Wolfe's fiction, to get ahead in the world. Others, like the homebound Joyners, stayed in Madison or Yancey Counties, troubled and offended by the changes they observed in their former kin and neighbors.

Rapid change is not a phenomenon of just the twentieth century. The history of people is a story of conflict, disruption, migration and resulting change. Yet, in every age, people are apprehensive of change, and leaders arise to deal with the problem of continuity of meaning, values and integrity amidst change. The boy born in Madison County that March day in 1882 was to become such a person.

As David Whisnant has written in a perceptive *Appalachian Journal* article, Lunsford found a way between the old and the new. He had an instinct for what he was doing. He liked progress, but even more he loved the traditional ways of his youth. He knew he could not "preserve" the latter against the tide of the former as a lone worker, but he hoped it was possible to create a climate in which the old ways would be repsected, and he knew that if they had the prestige of respect then they would be more likely to survive, in some form, into a new age. His instincts told him that he could not do what he wanted to do in direct conflict with the economic and social movements of his time. So he joined these forces and used them and their momentum and money to promote what was dear to his heart. Perhaps this would not have worked elsewhere, but the Asheville Chamber of Commerce was in business to sell the main product of Western North Carolina: climate and scenery, and to some extent a way of life that had passed from most places in the country but which was strong and vibrant in the Blue Ridge and Smokies, or could be made to appear so. Handicrafts, music and colorful dances were a major part of the charm of the region. The Chamber needed Bascom to bring out the musicians and dancers for the tourists to see. Bascom needed the money and the promotional apparatus that the Chamber could muster. With the help of the Chamber, Bascom created an atmosphere where the folk arts were cherished. Thus they continued to grow, in somewhat changed forms to be sure, but with a new vitality, not just as quaint survivals but as evidence of a culture that had retained a special integrity.

David Whisnant wrote that Lunsford "understood the emerging politics of culture in the United State and consciously chose" to do the work he did in order to create a new cultural form.

> The importance of Lunsford's Mountain Dance and Folk Festival extends far beyond its local context in western North Carolina. As the earliest of the folk festivals, it was an important seed-bed for hundreds of other festivals spread across the United States . . .It contributed to substantial cultural revitalization inside the region and projected a new image of regional culture to a national and international audience through media coverage and guest appearances at the White House and elsewhere. It constituted an

Bascom and Freda Lunsford, Byard Ray and bass player. Courtesy Asheville Chamber of Commerce and Loyal Jones.

> important transitional cultural form between "the old and the new"—between the old rural, traditional, community and family-based culture and the emerging urban, industrial, media-dominated mass culture that swept through the mountains as it did through the rest of the country. It furnishes a complex and instructive example of intentional intervention into traditional culture by a forceful entrepreneur . . .

"I feared that, as the old folks passed on, they would take with them to their graves all memory of the tunes and lyrics which once the mountain people had sung with such joy and gusto," Lunsford once said, explaining his motivation. As his fellow Madison Countian Lee Wallin said of a great old ballad singer who had passed on, "It's hard to think that a voice like that is silent now." There was wonder, puzzlement, and a hurting loss in his voice as he said it. Perhaps it is well nigh impossible for us today , who never heard more than one or two of the truly natural traditional singers, to comprehend what it really means to lose one or all of them. For many of us—not all, because some of the common people instinctively know the importance of tradition—there was a time when we might have lost much of our traditional legacy so thoroughly that we would not have known we suffered a loss. And this is the worst kind of poverty—not knowing that one lacks something vital. But we did not lose it, thanks to Lunsford and those others who knew its value.

"The fellow who knows the traditional background of his people has the advantage over someone that has no idea about it," he said. "The folk side is bigger than the other side, the artistic side. It's more important than the other side." Jean Earnhardt in the Greensboro *Daily News* (June 7, 1964) explained Bascom's reasons for pushing the ballads: "To him the old songs are wonderful for they speak of the things that unite people—love and sadness, growing up and marrying, and death." But it wasn't just the ballads. It was the meaning behind the traditions, the essence of the common people, that he thought all young people ought to know about. And he especially thought that those who wanted to sing the folk songs ought to have a feel for the tradition. The art of a thing alone was not enough. He felt that some of the popular folk singers had more art than feeling for the material. Someone asked him what he thought of a certain popular folk singer. "I said he is pretty good, pretty good. He used to be better than he is now. He knows art music, and that hurts some. If you are tied down to the precision of a thing it's like a preacher reading his sermon." He didn't feel, though, that there was necessarily a conflict between artistry, and authenticity. He encouraged people to improve their artistry although when it came to a choice between artistry and a feel for the value of the traditional material, he chose the latter.

"I'll tell you that I've had a lot of fun. I've had more fun than anybody," Lunsford said when he was 89. That seems to be the best note on which to end this account of his life and work. he changed folks' attitudes about mountain traditions; many who had turned away from these traditions came back. While new generations grew to love them. In helping them to understand and love their traditions, he helped mountaineers to regain respect for themselves, and he helped countless outsiders, who had seen only the negative side of Appalachian life through popular literature and the media's treatment of the region, to see that there was a great deal more to Appalachian culture than they had realized. His accomplishments over three-quarters of a centrury required hard and imaginative work. In his success, though, he wanted everyone to know that he "had more fun than anybody."

Lunsford crossed hell on that rotten rail, with a scant look downward, and he grabbed for and got a strong hold on the essence of Appalachian culture. He happily presented and interpreted that culture wherever he went in a life of constant motion. It was his calling, his special job of work, and his delight.

Bascom Lunsford and partner. Courtesy Mars Hill College Memorial Library and Loyal Jones.

REVIEWS

Minstrel of the Appalachians: The Story Of Bascom Lamar Lunsford

by Loyal Jones

Boone, North Carolina: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1984. xiv pp. 249. Photographs, musical transcriptions, song texts, title lists, bibliography, discographies. (paper: $10.95).

Richard Blaustein

Bascom Lamar Lunsford (1882-1973) was an original, the sort of man who would have protested violently had anyone attempted to pigeonhole or categorize him. What we have in *Minstrel of The Appalachians: The Story of Bascom Lamar Lunsford* can be categorized, however, as the portrait of a cultural mediator who spent most of his long, active life seeking to preserve the musical and dance traditions of his beloved Western North Carolina. Actually Loyal Jones has given us considerably more than this; his biography of Lunsford is enhanced by copious photographs, archival and commercial recording data, song and tune transcriptions, and even the texts of Lunsford's comic recitations. There is much here to interest the folklorist, country music historian and Appalachianist, but from the perspective of this reviewer, perhaps the greatest value of this highly readable and carefully produced book is the insight it gives us into the personality and emotional motivations of the leader of a major nativistic revitalization movement.

Folklorists and other students of cultural history are still grappling with the concepts of nativism and revitalization, but there can be little doubt that Bascom Lamar Lunsford was one of those charismatic personalities who emerge during periods of drastic social change and take it upon themselves to consciously and actively seek to revive and perpetuate selected aspects of their traditional cultures. Echoing another native of Western North Carolina, Thomas Wolfe, societies and cultures that have experienced the impact of rapid, radical change "can't go home again" any more than can individuals, but their members, and particularly their charismatic leaders *can* try to maintain some semblance of continuity through the deliberate revival of forms of expressive culture which symbolize and summarize their distinctive identity. In his characteristically moderate, thoughtful fashion, Loyal Jones has risen to the challenge presented to him by the folklorist Archie Green, and has outlined a personal theory of "the politics of culture" that is highly cogent to the concerns of *Now And Then*. Basically Jones sees all of life in terms of tension between old and new:" . . . if we are to benefit from the culture that spawned us, we must carry it into new times and places." (viii). Jones clearly recognizes, though, that conflict between old and new is not the only source of tension in the lives of Appalachian people; there is also the conflict between shame and pride, low status and high status, blending into the mainstream versus retaining a sense of meaningful connection with one's place and people. It takes a special kind of person to come to terms with these tensions and resolve them, not only for oneself but for an entire cultural group. According to Loyal Jones, Bascom Lamar Lunsford was almost fated to play the role of a cultural mediator: he was downhome yet sophisticated, devoted to tradition yet realistic enough to recognize that living traditions could not and would not remain static; and perhaps most significantly, his rearing and education gave him the range of communications skills which made it possible for hime to gain the trust and affestion of coming from a wide variety of social backgrounds. As Jones asserts:

> Bascom Lunsford found a way to strengthen the old folk traditions and to use them to put people at ease about their place and culture at a time when most of the messages about Appalachia were negative. I believe that Bascom's work was of profound importance. He helped create an atmosphere in which the folk traditions could flourish and thus where the regional people could flourish because they had regained a sense of pride. That is a work more of us should be about. (ix).

Pride in and respect for mountain people and their traditions are threads running through the entire length of *Minstrel of The Appalachians*. Lunsford struck out against the hillbilly stereotype at every turn; he always dressed and presented himself as a gentleman and took pride in the fact that he was the only man whom John Lair, owner and promoter of the Renfro Valley Barn Dance, could never convince to appear onstage in a checked shirt and comical hat. Nevertheless, for all that he did to project a positive image of mountain life and culture, Lunsford had his prejudices, and blind spots; and he certainly had his share of critics and detractors.

On the home front, Lunsford was a favorite target of hidebound fundamentalist preachers who, then as now, looked upon fiddling and dancing as satanic distractions from the righteous path; he was also the object of scorn of ant-like souls who saw him as a frivolous grasshopper skipping about the countryside while his family and fortune went to rack and ruin. Lunsford's consuming interest in collecting folklore and organizing festivals did keep him on the road a good deal of the time, but there is no evidence to suggest that he was anything but a loving, caring husband and father who did his best to provide for the needs of his family.

Lunsford's work with folk festivals, though, did bring him into conflict with a variety of adversaries, such as commercial promoters who attempted to pressure him into compromising his standards of integrity (he is reported to have beaned a radio announcer with a banjo on the stage of the Asheville Mountain Dance and Music Festival for daring to broadcast live commercials contrary to agreement), and he also incurred the wrath of disgruntled contestants who believed that he was rigging competition to favor his pet musicians and dancers, an occupational hazard still encountered by judges at oldtime music and dance contest. On a more intellectual and theoretical plane, Lunsford was also attacked by elitist academics who felt that his scholarly credentials were deficient, by romantic antiquarians, who viewed his attempts to keep abreast of the evolving traditions of the living folk as betrayals of authenticity, and also by doctrinaire Marxists, who were appalled by his utter lack of proletarian consciousness.

In the final analysis, Bascom Lamar Lunsford felt no compunction to live up to anybody's expectiations other than his own. Where others might have perceived inherent contradictions, it was the most natural thing in the world for Lunsford to be both a folk performer *and* a folklorist, a guardian of tradition *and* a promoter of tourism, an educated man *and* a mountaineer. Lunsford was a man of many parts, and the whole added up to one

of the most energetic and effective proponents of mountain culture the region has ever known, now or then. Loyal Jones should be congratulated for not only providing an illuminating portrait of this complex, versatile man and his role in the Appalachian folk revival but also for having given us a great deal of food for thought. Highly recommended.

Vein Of Words

by Jim Wayne Miller
Big Timber, Montana: Seven Buffaloes Press, 1984.

Fred Waage

In his latest collection of poems, *Vein of Words*, Jim Wayne Miller is as usual provocative and interesting, but there is a unique direction in this volume. With some exceptions, his poems' subjects are the art and craft of writing itself.

While poems about poetry are not themselves novel, writing them in a strongly localized Appalachian voice and frame of reference is. Here the regional voice presumes to provide aesthetic guidance in a universalizing mode. To me, this presumption is ironic. *Vein of Words* means to answer the unspoken yet widely-held assumption that the Appalachian writer is somehow "limited." While he/she may have a native talent for describing mountain farms, foxfire folkways, and the like, he/she must break out into the bigger, wider geographical and intellectual world in order to learn, let alone teach, the High Truths of Art. *Vein of Words* identifies the universal qualities of creativity with regional topography and experience, implying that no experience beyond that of the region is necessary to the achievement of even the highest goals.

Ed Presnell making a dulcimer. Beech Mountain, North Carolina. Courtesy Thomas G. Burton.

But there are some other dimensions to this aesthetic theme. The subject of most of these poems is *words* themselves, and the voice in most of the poems, very close to the author's own voice, is that of someone who mines for words, not someone who uses words to describe the experience of mining. Thus the "Appalachian" realm is in a sense reduced, or distanced—it becomes more a storehouse of metaphors than an actual place. This is not necessarily a criticism, because one might consider a culture's literary "maturity" to have been reached when its artists are secure enough about the validity of their space to employ it to further ends, rather than continually reaffirming its actual existence.

Also, many of these poems arise from Miller's own experience directing writing workshops, and they use Appalachian figures to make the reader understand issues of creativity by couching them in the language of familiar experience. The result is inspirational and, you might say, "aesthetically populist" verse. "Try to think of your first draft as a creek/in flood time, roaring out of banks" ("Poetry Workshop"). As it were, any aspiring artist who has experienced this scene can learn from the swelling flood figure what stance to take toward a rough draft. This persistent insertion of poetry into the natural landscape eventually has an almost disturbing effect—every external scene is actually laid out inside the creating consciousness;

> Like rocks in a cultivated field
> the poems are always there,
> and never an end to them . . .

("Thinking About my Poems")

Miller can be categorical enough when he wants to in these poems: "Poems lit with the glow of grand abstraction/are at the same time local, low, and plain" ("Notes to a Student . . .")—but they do not end up, for me, enunciating any particular poetics or aesthetic theory. The irony expounded at the beginning of this review is complemented by a second irony—the Appalachian writer is actually sophisticated enough to know that there are no High Truths of Art to which all can subscribe; and this is a High Truth which the non-Appalachian writer is often too provincial to perceive. The poet compares experience and creative activity in illuminating ways, but the individual reader/writer must find his/her own meaning in this illumination; the poems are not lessons, but interchanges; as one of his titles proclaims, "Reader, We're in this Poem Together."

A note of recognition should be given to Art Cuelho, who is making a singular contribution with Seven Buffaloes Press to the publication of contemporary Appalachian writers as well as other regional and minority writers. His full list can be obtained from Seven Buffaloes Press, Box 249, Big Timber, Montana 59011.

Literature Of Tennessee

Edited by Ray Willbanks
Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1984.

Fred Waage

Literature of Tennessee is an original and flawed guide to one state's writing. It consists of a series of critical articles, supplemented by "Selected Bibliographies," on periods and major figures in Tennessee literature. Separate chapters are devoted to "Literature of Tennessee before 1920", the "Southern Renascence," John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson and Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Andrew Lytle, James Agee, Peter Taylor, Shelby Foote, and "Contemporary Writers."

The originality of the volume lies in its recognition of the unacknowledged extent to which American writers are bound, by many different ties, to particular regions, despite the national status they may have achieved. It suggests the possibilties in approaching many writers other than those (such as William Faulkner) commonly defined as "regional," in terms of the local cultural influences which become part of their consciousness no matter where they go.

On the other hand, this anthology has many limitations. The introduction is cursory, there is no material substantially defining Tennessee as a cultural, geographical, historical, sociological space at different periods; as a result there is not much sense of connection between the writers covered in terms of any "Tennessee" qualities they may share or reject. They seem more like a group of people who have some connection with Tennessee. Also, it seems to me that a disproportionate space is given to the individual writers of the Fugitive/Agrarian period. They certainly deserve it, but the Vanderbilt area is almost a separate realm, and a better sense of Tennessee literature as a whole could be gained from spending more time with lesser-known writers who embodied more wide-spread values. It is something like devoting the largest section of a California Writers book to the San Francisco beat period.

The chapters devoted to individual writers are also generally general—they might appear in a literary encyclopedia; they have biography, chronology, and some plot summary, but not striking insight into the meanings of their works, or their particular Tennesseeness. I was particularly disappointed by the coverage of contemporary writers. Do Jesse Hill Ford, Madison Jones, Ishmael Reed, and Nikki Giovanni constitute the spectrum of contemporary writing in/of Tennessee? How can a book on Tennessee literature not include Rachel Maddux, who is only recently lost to us? How can it neglect Cormac McCarthy, Etheredge Knight, or even Peter Jenkins, a strong Tennessean by adoption if there ever was one?

The limitations of this anthology suggest conclusions about regionalization in the consideration of literature. In a mobile culture it may not be possible to find the "ultimate" regional designation of any writer, even if the presence of a regional consciousness is very strong in that writer. But precisely because this consciousness is so strong, and so diverse, it needs to be traced in more subtle ways, and studies of contemporary American writers should focus more on the mingling yet strong scents radiating from their different places which attract us to their works.

Relics And Treasures

by Uncle Charlie Osborne.

June Appal JA 049. LP record with booklet insert. Fifteen selections featuring the voice and fiddle of Charles Osborne of Russell County, Virginia. Released September 1985.

Charles Wolfe

In a year when Nashville's Grand Ole Opry celebrates its sixtieth anniversary, fans of Appalachian music have had to make their peace with one inescapable fact: the deep pervasiveness of radio and phonograph records into a music that was once thought as crystalline and pure as a mountain stream. "Commercialism," for better or worse, touched the music earlier than we have thought and more widely than we have thought, and today it is almost impossible to find a musician whose style or repertoire was formed before the mid-1920's, when the media invasion began. Documenting the music of fiddlers and banjoists on record labels like County, Rounder, and June Appal today requires as much knowledge of popular culture as it does folklore. All of which makes the recent release on June Appal of a set of recordings by Uncle Charlie Osborne all the more significant. Uncle Charlie (Charles Nelson Osborne) was 94 when these recordings were done, and his biography tells us that his music had been pretty much formed by 1910—a generation before the Virginia hills had heard of Fiddlin' John Carson or The Grand Ole Opry. One listens in vain on *Relics And Treasures* for the familiar Fiddlin' Arthur Smith lick, or the tell-tale sign of Clayton McMichen's long-bow double stops. No one will know for sure what Appalachian fiddling really sounded like in 1905, but this may be as close as we'll get.

Not that the album has only antiquarian value. Uncle Charlie's style, with its high drones, short bowing patterns, and internal rhythm, is quite infectuous, and a pleasant respite from the oily bluegrass fiddles heard so much today. Three of the tunes here are done unaccompanied, a feat few modern fiddlers would know how to bring off, but a style that was all too common in an earlier age (cf. "Omie Wise," "Joe Bowers," and "You'll Never Miss Your Mother Til She's Gone"). On four other tunes, Uncle Charlie is accompanied by album producer and folk music scholar Tom Bledsoe on banjo (creating another very early string band format), and on yet four others by Bledsoe in the more modern guitar back-up. Three of the album's highlights are three cuts featuring Bledsoe, Osborne, and Uncle Charlie's son Johnny Cowan Osborne, a fine banjo player, who has left Russell County to move to Baltimore.

The tunes on the LP range from the familiar ("Sugar in the Gourd," "Little Brown Jug," "Ida Red") to the unusual ("Georgia Row," "Nancy Ann," "Brown's Dream"). There is a considerable overlap between Osborne's repertoire and that of the County's other famous fiddler, Cowan "Fiddlin" Powers, a Dungannon native who led one of the first mountain string bands to make records back in 1924. It seems certain that Osborne learned directly from Powers, not his records, since a number of the Powers tunes were never issued on records, and some of these Uncle Charlie plays. Fiddling is not everything, here, though; Uncle Charlie sings interesting ballad versions of "Omie Wise," "Joe Bowers," and the old pop song "You Will Never Miss Your Mother Until She is Gone;" he even tells a tall tale along the way. It's all in all a remarkable *tour de force* for a man in his nineties.

The documentation is satisfying, erudite, and as extensive as any on recent traditional albums. Complete song lyrics, and solid song histories are provided by Richard Blaustein of ETSU, and Tom Bledsoe offers a 2500-word essay about Uncle Charlie's life and background. We learn a lot about Uncle Charlie's formative years, if rather less than we might want about his opinions today or image of himself as a tradition-bearer. Still, this is a very satisfying production—well recorded, well-produced, handsome, and a fine tribute to a remarkable musician. It is also one of the first in what will hopefully be a long line of documentaries sponsored by the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at ETSU. It sets a high standard.

APPALACHIAN MUSIC

East Tennessee Normal School musical group, organized by Prof. David Wiley Hayworth (seated, center, with banjo), 1914.

NOW AND THEN

East Tennessee State University Bluegrass Band.

APPALACHIAN VOICES

When Cecil Sharp visited the Southern Appalachians between 1916 and 1918, he remarked that never before in his experience as a collector of folksong had he encountered a community in which singing was literally as common as speaking; Ralph Peer, the Victor talent scout who discovered Jimmie Rogers and the Carter Family in the twin cities of Bristol in 1927, also commented upon the rich musical culture of the region. Singing and song-writing are still very much a part of Appalachian life, as evidenced by the work of the living artists featured in this special section of *Now and Then*.

The Appalachian songwriters highlighted here include Janette Carter, daughter of A.P. and Sarah Carter of the original Carter Family; Jean Ritchie, a native of Viper, Kentucky, who has long been recognized as one of Appalachia's finest dulcimer players, singers, and song-writers; Robin and Linda Williams, a husband-wife duo who have been frequent guests on National Public Radio's "A Prairie Home Companion;" John McCutcheon, a dynamic multi-instrumentalist and singer who has also emerged as a gifted songwriter; Ed Snodderly, one of Johnson City's finest young guitarists and balladeers; and Sparky Rucker of Knoxville, an exciting exponent of the blues and its modern offshoots. Here, then, are some of the favorite songs of some of the most creative songwriters working in the Southern Appalachians today.

—Richard Blaustein

"Close Of A Day"

Janette Carter

"They were proud, my people. They worked so hard—they shared their food, their love, their loves. All the neighbors were intertwined. They helped one another in sickness—or in a season of plenty. Neighbors were close to one another. They all worked to survive! If our cow went dry, some neighbor had one with a new calf. They shared the milk, fruit, gardens. When a neighbor died, the men dug a grave with a pick and shovel. As a child I thought the most horrible sound on earth was dirt clods hitting the casket after it had been lowered into the ground. I would cling to my daddy's hand and thank God I still had my parents! And tears would fall. My heart ached for those who had died and left children and family." (*Living With Memories*, 1983, p. 15.)

This song is about my mother, my daddy and my childhood.

— Janette Carter

In visions I see children laughing,
The weeds in the corn, hoed away.
To walk in the dust of a man you could trust—
His earnings were earned the hard way.
To rest in the cool of the evening—
The work's all done; now you may play.
A mother's sweet kiss, things I often miss
Are gone like the close of a day.

Chorus
I'm nearing the end of a beautiful day.
My worries like sunsets, they fade away.
To kneel round the hearth with loved ones and pray.
At the close of a day.

The trials of life I learned early,
To humbly pray and rely
Though skies may be grey, to trust and obey
A power much greater than I.

Chorus

And when the last mile I have traveled
The faltering steps no longer sway.
The last rays of sun shining warm on my hand,
I'll rest at the close of a day.

Chorus

From Janette Carter, *Living With Memories*, Hiltons, Virginia: Carter Family Memorial Music Center, 1983. Reprinted by permission of author.

"My Appalachian Mountain Home"

Janette Carter

"I loved spring! To walk amid elder bushes and gather the clusters of blackberries, to hear the cool clear water rushing over the rocks in the mountain streams, to watch the minnows swimming and feel the damp, green moss. Where the violets grew, I'd gather a bundle in my hands to give my mother. she'd put them in a glass of water and set this bouquet on the window sill." (*Living With Memories*, 1983; p.2.)

In writing this, I thought how people of this area are seen as being poor, when they are really rich in their love of nature and God's creation.

— Janette Carter

Honeysuckles are blooming around my cabin door.
It's here I will live, I will die,
Where willows will weep, still waters run deep,
Parent's dear hands, to hold and to guide.
My pathway to manhood, the road will be long.
Appalachian tear drops will fall.
I'll walk, oh so proud, on my land I'm allowed.
I feel I'm the richest of all.

My family, my Jesus, my memories and dreams
Are entwined in a house on the hill.
The mountains, the streams, green pines tall and lean
Surround me so calm and so still.
In my Appalachia, my neighbors are kind.
They love me if I'm right or wrong.
Though others walk tall, I feel very small.
I praise God each day with a song.

A stranger -- they pity the farmers, the mines,
His struggles, poverty always there,
A man and his plow, a weathered dear brow,
A family all knitted by prayer.
The fragrance of lilacs on Jim Thomas Hill,
The meadows a carpet of green.
Appalachia, my home—all I'll ever own.
Rare beauty, the land of my dreams.

From Janette Carter, *Living With Memories*, Hiltons, Virginia: Carter Family Memorial Music Center, 1983. Reprinted by permission of author.

"Living With Memories"

Janette Carter

"I've heard my daddy tell over and over again how he met Sara Elizabeth Dougherty. He was selling fruit trees and stopped at the farm of Mr. Milburn Nickels in Midway, Virginia. He heard a beautiful voice singing 'Engine 143'—a voice he could hear clear and sweet even before he got into the yard. She was playing an autoharp.

How he loved her, this sixteen-year-old girl. She was like a beautiful painting—you had to see her and know her to know there was such beauty. She always reminded me of an Indian maiden or a queen. If you ever met her, you never forgot her! So my daddy kept walking back and forth across Clinch Mountain until he won her heart. They were married when she was just sixteen, and they moved to Maces Springs, in the valley." (*Living With Memories*, 1983; p. 27.)

This is a love song I've sung at several weddings; it's also how I'd have liked my own life to be!

— Janette Carter

A boy, a girl, with auburn curls,
Childhood sweethearts were we,
So very near; in laughter or tears
I've loved you so tenderly.

Wherever you go, my dear, I will go,
Walking so close to thee
Down life's long and rugged road,
Living with memories.

Chorus
A winning smile, the clear blue eyes,
Dark and wavy hair.
The tender touch, I love so much,
And you're always there—
To hold my hand and understand,
So much, a part of me.
Together we've weathered a whole lot of storms,
Living with memories.

The youthful years have passed away
Like falling leaves from a tree.
The children's steps no longer echo.
Again there's just you and me.
If you go first and I remain,
No matter how lonely I'll be,
I'll spend the rest of my life alone,
Living with memories.

Chorus

From Janette Carter, *Living With Memories*, 1983. Reprinted by permission of author.

Buna Hicks playing homemade fretted banjo, Beech Mountain, North Carolina. Courtesy Thomas G. Burton.

"Daughter of McLeod"

Robin Williams

Daughter of McLeod is about two hardworking, uncomplicated people making the best out of life for as long as it lasts.

— Robin Williams

Her father's name it was McLeod
He owned some land up in Jericho
And she had no gold to make her proud
She made her clothes out of calico

The simple things that people seek
They were not hard for her to find
For treasures fall upon the meek
While others are left crying

The months that passed they seemed like days
We tilled the land and built a home
the years they came and they went with haste
And we never were alone

But she took sick late last winter
She said nothing of the pain
I knew the will that she had in her
Never heard her once complain

We laid her down in her grave
About a half a month ago

With a pretty smile upon her face
And her golden hair aflow

1st verse again.

Robin Williams, 1975, The New Music Times, Inc., BMI. Recorded on Flying Fish album FF 327, *Close As We Can Get*. Republished by permission of author.

"Murderers On The Cumberland Plateau"

Robin and Linda Williams

Murderers On The Cumberland Plateau was written after having read Harry Caudill's book *Night Comes To The Cumberlands*. We were fascinated by his descriptions of how the family feuds started and the relationship between many of the feuds and the Civil War. The first time we ever sang the song was at the Down Home in Johnson City. After our last act a woman from the audience came up to us and said that her great-grandmother had gone through an experience similar to that of the woman in the song. So the song is real to at least one person.

— Robin Williams

The oak and poplar trees grew tall around our mountain farm
With corn in the fields and tobacco in the barn
The word came up from Pikeville 'cross the ridges to our door
That men were dressed in blue and grey and heading off to war
Our days of living good grew short and little did we know
We'd be driven off by *Murderers On the Cumberland Plateau*

Shiloh took a rebel bay and Johnson was his name
His pa called us Unionists and he held us to blame
They caught my husband by the spring and they shot him from behind
Leaving nothing but hell's fury burning in this heart of mine
I hid my babies in the woods and I kept their crying low
No one could stop those *Murderers On The Cumberland Plateau*

They burnt the house and the fields. They stole the cattle and the swine
their drunken laughter ridiculed my darlin' who lay dying
No one was there to hear as we sang our bitter tune
Of broken hearted paupers on the wretched road to ruin
So we headed off the mountains to the settlements below
Driven out by *Murderers On The Cumberland Plateau*

I'm sunburnt and I'm dirty and I'm mired in poverty
And the memory of a distant grave is all that carries me
My cheeks turn white with rage. My eyes are flooded fury red
When I tell my sons the names of the men who shot their father dead
Oh I can see it, yes their unforgiving eyes do show
They won't forget those *Murderers On The Cumberland Plateau*

Oh dread disease and famine, please don't take my sons
I'll need them soon as they have strength enough to hold a gun
'Cause we'll be going back as sure as this world turns around
And hollows, peaks, and snags will ring with the bloody battle sounds
Back up to Kentucky where the oak and poplar grow
Back to slay those *Murderers On The Cumberland Plateau*

Robin and Linda Williams, 1978, The New Music Times, Inc. BMI.
Recorded June Appal JA 031, *Dixie Highway Sign*. Used by permission of authors.

"The Leaving Train"

Robin and Linda Williams

The Leaving Train came about after a conversation between Linda and a 20 year old waitress in a laundromat in Tampa, Florida. The waitress was from Kentucky and had left her home there to start a new life in Tampa. She had left two small kids with her parents in the mountains, and her goal was to someday soon reunite her small family. We wrote the song from her child's point of view as a twist.

— Robin Williams

Mama's coming home today. But she ain't coming home to stay
There's no work in our town. Everything's near 'bout shut down
The Company's come and gone. All the new folks moved on
Empty stores on empty street, empty bed where mama sleeps.

Chorus

Some day soon, I'm gonna ride
On *The Leaving Train* by mama's side
There's a broken link in the family chain
And it's all because of *The Leaving Train*

When Friday comes I go back down to the train depot
She's running way behind and Sunday haunts my mind
It's been a week since the train stopped here, one week since she held me near
Too soon *The Leaving Train* will carry her off again

Chorus

Living without mama hurts, but I don't know which is worse
Her being gone away or having just one day
To feel her loving touch when it's what I want so much
But one day I will go 'cause mama told me so

Chorus

Recorded on Flying Fish album FF 327, *Close As We Can Get*.

"A Melody From You"

Ed Snodderly

This song is about a man I knew, Thomas Farris, a goodlooking, gray-headed man in his early fifties, who was certainly an interesting and unique character. Thomas was a philosopher, he was a hipster, but mostly he was a jazzman. I got to know Thomas when he was living in the back of the Down Home Picking Parlor in Johnson City. He had the responsibility of keeping an eye on the place and cleaning up, which he did occasionally. Lots of late nights were spent at the bar talking to friends and listening to music. Usually at some point Thomas would wander up to the piano and play whatever came to his mind. Being around Thomas is something I really miss these days. I wish now that I had tapes of some of that stuff he played. It was pretty wild, with lots of crazy, altered chords.

I wrote part of this song while traveling in a van to Buffalo, thinking about him after I heard that he had died at the age of fifty-eight of a stroke in March, 1984. The one thing I respected most about Thomas was his accepting attitude; musically speaking, his tastes were varied. His request was that you play the best you could and that you play with feeling. I like that. I know if he was here today, as always, he would listen to "A Melody From You."

— Ed Snodderly

A melody played
With a bass line,
Run through the bottom
A saxophone played your tune.
A soulful heart
Will play its own part
If you let it,
If you set it free.

Chorus
No matter if it's jazz or blues
No matter if it's that ole time music
No matter what coat you choose
Shake your foot and move your head
Play it like you ain't dead
And a melody will play from you.

Outasight
Bum a light
Take a ride and beat the time
The marching band stands for parade
Pick up pieces
Where you leave them, forget about all those reasons
And then play the tune
That's in you head.

Chorus

Well, that's what I learned from you
From a late night cool talkin' brother
Who snapped his finger
And said, "Hey, man, yeah!"
And your world was all so crazy
And you really didn't give a damn
But you did and you loved it all
And you said:

Ed Snodderly, 1985, Drivin' Round Music, BMI. Reprinted by permission of author.

"Yesterday's Kid"

Ed Snodderly

I got inspired to write this song one afternoon thinking about a picture that's been around for a while in an old scrapbook. It's one of me and a cousin of mine, back in the days when I was being a cowboy. I'm carrying a gun and holster with a straw hat on my head with a pull string. My cousin seems to be a little more sane in that she is just wearing jeans and shirt. It seems we are just hanging out by this dusty creek that ran through my grandparents' farm. I remember that creek seemed like a river and I remember I spent a lot of time there throwing rocks.

I just got to thinking of things I did when I was a kid and how I relate to all of that today.

— Ed Snodderly

Yesterday's kid
Was just getting by.
Not a worry in my pocket
Or a single goodbye.
Yesterday's time
Was like it was never going to end
Skip a rock on the water
On Sunday hum a hymn.

Yesterday's walk
I walked through the fields
Of knee high clover
I watched automobiles
Yesterday's whims
Were a million for the taking
Grab a low willow limb
Try not to get a spanking.

Chorus
Grandpa played the fiddle
Ole Sally Goodin when he would
Grandma she cooked potatoes in grease,
and cornbread.
Cousins played piano
"Chopsticks," "Heart and Soul"
And I'd pick up the guitar
And I would strum along.

Yesterday's taste
Hasn't gotten any better
Still hate beets,
I'm afraid of red hot peppers.
Yesterday's women, though,
Remember how I fell
They'll cool you quick as cold water
They'll make your young heart melt.

Chorus

Yesterday's dreams
I try not to forget them
In this old world
That we sure are a-spinning.
Still there are secrets
That I'd never tell a soul
Still I'm yesterday's kid
Holding on with a tight hold.

Ed Snodderly, 1984. Drivin' Round Music, BMI. Reprinted by permission of author.

"The Farming Man"

Ed Snodderly

I get aggravated these days when I think people aren't respecting the land we have. It's also upsetting when you feel that people who are in decision-making positions mistreat or take actions that do not favor the farming people.

I've spent enough time hanging around farms to know that it's hard work and the amount of pride is priceless. It's a fulfilling way to live, and it's a way so many have spent their lives. I believe that its values teach us a very important lesson that helps us keep balance in this modern world today.

This song was written with a friend of mine in mind. Mostly, too, I'm romancing about the farming man and just one of the choices that has to be made today.

— Ed Snodderly

Sometimes I wonder why I stay around this old place
It's not like it was in daddy's day
The fence posts are old and the cattle mostly gone
I wonder why I don't just move on.

I'm educated and they're hiring at a factory
Computer chips for some big ass company
I went away for a few years, I missed the sound of tractors
The smell of flowers and a good home cooked meal.

Chorus
I just couldn't leave these memories
It's really what you believe
That makes up your mind
I'll be strong enough to make it
I know where I'll be
The farming man.

Now these times don't seem to favor the farming man
For the food that's on this table for this land
While the winter it's still cold
There'll be dry wood for burning
And time to wonder how it will mend

In the summer hire some young boys to put up hay
It gives them money for a night at the arcade
It builds a muscle or two, and a good chance for dreaming
And a reason why I just don't move on.

Ed Snodderly, 1984. Drivin' Round Music, BMI. Reprinted by permission of author.

Publicity shot of Doc Williams and his Border Riders, WWVA, Wheeling, West Virginia, late 1940's.

Tab Ward playing homemade fretted banjo, Beech Mountain, North Carolina. Courtesy Thomas G. Burton.

"Drive Back The Night"

Sparky Rucker

After Mount St. Helens exploded and sent dust flying over the mid-west it could truly be said that Kansas had the most beautiful sunsets in the world.

When the sun went down I flicked on my headlights and they looked like a big ol' broom, going before me sweeping away the gloom. The mind always turns inward during a spiritual time like this.

— Sparky Rucker

Drive back the night (2x) (oh baby)
Driving this old van
Wherever I can
To wherever feels right
(want you) Drive back the night (2x) (oh baby)
On this ol' trail
We'll never fail
It feels so right.

The headlights are making/
The night into daylight/
so I can see.
But I sometimes get lonesome/
and night's my companion/
So which shall it be?

Chorus
I loved a woman/
In Pennsylvania/
and Tennessee.
Up in Ohio/
Minnesota/
Just living free.

Chorus
The life of a gypsy/
a roving musician/
is one that is good.
I'd never change it/
or rearrange it/
even if I could.

Chorus

James "Sparky" Rucker, Lipra, 1984. Used by permission of author.

"Cold And Lonesome On A Train"

Sparky Rucker

I was on tour in late winter of 1973, traveling by train through the prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba in Canada. The trip from Edmonton, Alberta to Winnipeg, Manitoba on the Canadian National railroad is over 900 miles; it runs through rolling plains past horse, cattle and even buffalo herds. The temperature was well below zero, and the coupling joints between the cars were iced over (like walking through a frozen hallway when going from car to car).

The stain of a failed love affair brought on an old stomach problem, "and it was mighty cold and awfully lonesome" on that long ride. My guitar was the only "person" that seemed to want to listen.

— Sparky Rucker

Traveling across the country
just as dark as it could be.
The light reflected on the window
Lord I just can't hardly see.
Got a hurtin' down inside me Lord
I cannot stand the pain
And it get awfully cold and lonesome
at night on a train.

I sometimes feel forsaken
when I'm traveling alone.
Like being in Alberta, Canada
when Tennessee's your home.
And the day you got on board, Lord
It was Sunday drizzling rain
And it gets awfully cold and lonesome
at night on a train.

Refrain
With memories of sunsets
and the loves I've left behind
All these times that I've traveled
just to find—
That the fading dreams and visions
of the friends I've lost and gained
Make me awfully cold and lonesome
at night on a train.

It's been weeks since I slept right
Lord I cannot find my rest
I'm weary of this traveling—but this
way seems the best.
I've been a lot of places—for my living
I pick and sing—
And it get awfully cold and lonesome
at night on a train.

Refrain

Sparky Rucker, Moonbow Music, 1977. Recorded on June Appal 017, *Cold and Lonesome On A Train*. Used by permission of author.

"Silas McGee"

Sparky Rucker

Silas McGee is a *real* folk hero, a former high school teammate of Gerald Ford. When President Ford decided it would be a good idea to invite his old team to Thanksgiving dinner at the White House, nobody was prepared for the "breath of fresh air" that was Silas, who breezed into town on a freight train (as an uninvited passenger). Silas was the darling of the media for the week he was in town. His candid remarks about Gerald Ford and the other "high class" guests drew embarrassed but loveable gasps from *Time, Newsweek* and *The Washington Post*. The celebrated "free pinstriped suit" and the Rose Lawn football game all went down in Folk History.

Here's a toast to Silas, "Good traveling, my man!"

— Sparky Rucker

Chorus
Silas McGee — Silas McGee
All you seem to want in your life
is to be travelin' free.
Silas McGee — Silas McGee
I hope God's sunshine's
still shining on thee.

A Thanksgiving invitation -
now what does this mean?
The last time you were together
was on a high school football team.
But this one's from the President
and you can't let him down
So you grab a fast freight train
into Washington town.

Chorus

He arrived into town
with his clothes hanging down
They said "You can't dress like that, man,
you're gonna look like a clown.
We'll buy a new suit
and then you'll be clean
Playing football in the Rose Garden
with the new White House team."

Chorus

From Grand Rapids, Michigan
to the San Francisco Bay
Jobs like a longshoreman
and other odds along the way.
Now it's a White House High School Reunion
seeing all the familiar faces
And telling President Ford
"Well, Juney, you really went places."

Chorus

Now it's all over
and Thanksgiving day done
All the turkey eaten
and all the rich folks gone home
But remember friend Silas
where ever you roam
You'll get a new pin-striped suit
and a plane ticket home.

Chorus (2x)

Sparky Rucker, Moonbow Music, 1977. Recorded on June Appal 017, *Cold and Lonesome On A Train*. Used by permission of author.

"Long Way Back To Georgia"

John McCutcheon

My approach to songwriting has always been with a high regard for direct but poetic storytelling. I generally am moved to write about working people (having comé from a strong labor background in my hometown) and those incidents in ordinary peoples' lives that make connections between folks that feel as though they're very different from one another. Hence, my songs have been about everything from WWI British soldiers to Alaskan fishermen to coal miners to dance tunes to songs about newborn babies. In my travels I continue to learn how alike we all are . . .

Long Way Back To Georgia began on a flight out of NYC one particularly beautiful moonlit night. Over the course of my concert career I have repeatedly played in Northern industrial towns where a large portion of my audience are folks who've moved from the Appalachian area looking for jobs and "a better life." It's an ambiguous venture at best and is never one in which the emotions and logic is totally trusted. "Long Way . . ." is an attempt to look at the dilemma from the viewpoint of a father whose life and family is being sucked into the inevitable changes that he sees going on all around him.

— John McCutcheon

There's a moon tonight like I never seen spilling down on this old farm
The stars are glistening in the rivers of sweat threaded down my arms
But the corn's laid by and the evening sky is the only thing that knows
How me and my daddy and his daddy 'for him
Hacked a life from these stoney rows
The plowing was done about an hour ago, but I can't go home just yet
I know Martha thinks I'm crazy, but I need some time to forget
About the empty fields and houses and the neighbors gone from here
Forewarnings and foreclosures, now there's four more gone this year
Reach back in the toolbox, boy, and get you another beer

This same moon shines on the cities far for these cool, clear nights of home
My boy heard about a job, said, "I'll go, by God!", left Martha and me alone
Now the apartment lights are his stars at night, he don't play the fiddle more
He wrote, "I love you dad, this ain't so bad, I just couldn't stand being poor"
But it's a long way back to Georgia, son, and it's a long way back from where
That steady check, hanging round your neck, is a yoke you learn to wear
But now the hot sun shines on the anxious lines, the surging tide of men
And women to the factories and away from home again

Half-runner beans and turnip greens and four corn rows out back

I got the only pickup on the block, country ham in a sack

Out on the porch where the apples are drying and the sun shines an hour a day

You know, I'd trade these hollers of stone and steel

For just a thimble of Georgia clay

Well, I know he's on the hootowl now and he can always pay his bills
Still I know his heart is torn apart at the thought of these old hills
But the hard times and the credit lines it broke him to the bone
And I know no measure of luck or treasure that will ever bring him home
I've never been a religious man, I just ain't inclined that way
But sometimes at home when I'm all alone I bow my head and pray saying, "Full moon, bless these furrowed fields and the furrowed brows of men
And women in the factories and back at home again"
He turned his tractor to the barn and whispered low, "Amen"

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"Christmas In The Trenches"

John McCutcheon

Christmas In The Trenches was begun backstage at a concert in Alabama after hearing this story (very well known all over Europe) the night before. Since my very first contact with what we so broadly call "folk music," I had always been moved by its function as storyteller and story-reminder in our lives. This song is based on a true story, though augmented by my own imaginings about how someone who lived through this extraordinary experience would go about living their life after being involved in it...

— John McCutcheon

My name is Francis Tolliver, I come from Liverpool
Two years ago the war was waiting for me after school
To Belgium and to Flanders, to Germany to here
I fought for King and Country I love dear
'Twas Christmas in the trenches, where the frost, so bitter, hung
The frozen fields of France were still, no Christmas song was sung
Our families back in England were toasting us today
Their brave and glorious lads so far away

I was lying with my messmate on the cold and rocky ground
When across the lines of battle came a most peculiar sound
Says I, "Now listen up, me boys!" each soldier strained to hear
As one young German voice sang out so clear
"He's singing bloody well, you know!" my partner says to me
Soon one by one each German voice joined in in harmony
The cannons rested silent, the gas clouds rolled no more
As Christmas brought us respite from the war

As soon as they were finished and a reverent pause was spent
"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" struck up some lads from Kent
The next they sang was "Stille Nacht," "'Tis 'Silent Night,'" says I
And in two tongues one song filled up that sky
"There's someone coming towards us!" the front line sentry cried
All sights were fixed on one lone figure coming from their side
His truce flag, like a Christmas star, shone on that plain so bright
As he bravely strode unarmed into the night

Soon one by one on either side walked into No Man's Land
With neither gun nor bayonet we met there hand to hand
We shared some secret brandy and we wished each other well
And in a flare-lit soccer game we gave 'em hell
We traded chocolates, cigarettes, and photographs from home
These sons and fathers far away from families of their own
Young Sanders played his squeeze box and they had a violin
This curious and unlikely band of men

Soon daylight stole upon us and France was France once more
With sad farewells we each began to settle back to war
But the question haunted every heart that lived that wondrous night
"Whose family have I fixed within my sight?"
'Twas Christmas in the trenches, where the frost, so bitter, hung
The frozen fields of France were warmed as songs of peace were sung
For the walls they'd kept between us to exact the work of war
Had been crumbled and were gone forevermore

My name is Francis Tolliver, in Liverpool I dwell
Each Christmas come since World War I I've learned its lessons well
That the ones who call the shots won't be among the dead and lame
And on each end of the rifle we're the same

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"Water From Another Time"

John McCutcheon

Water From Another Time was written the morning my youngest son, Peter, was born. My friend, Dillon Bustin, folklorist, songwriter, and filmmaker from Indiana, had recently completed a film of the same title featuring the paintings of Lois Doane, of Spring Valley, Indiana. Lois primarily did folk paintings of her town, a favorite of which centered around the old town pump. Following her habit of inscribing each painting with a moralizing verse, she penned the following on this particular painting:

"Don't spend your money in one lump
Don't forget the old town pump
Everyday had to be primed
With water from another time."

The last line, in particular, stuck with me and ended up worming its way into this song . . .

— John McCutcheon

New mown hay on a July morn
Grandkids runnin' through the knee-high corn
Sunburned nose and a scabbed-up knee
From a rope on the white oak tree
Just another summer's day on Grandpa's farm
With Grandma's bucket hanging off my arm
You know, the old pump's rusty but it works fine
Primed with water from another time

Chorus

It don't take much, but you gotta have some
The old ways help the new ways come
Just leave a little extra for the next in line
(They're gonna need a little) water from another time

Tattered quilt on the goosedown bed
Every stitch tells a story, my grandma said
Her mama's nightgown, her grandpa's pants
The dress that she wore to her high school dance
Wrapped at night in its patchwork scenes
I waltz with Grandma in my dreams
My arms, my heart, my life entwined
With water from another time

Chorus

Newborn cry in the morning air
The past, the future are wedded there
In this wellspring of my sons and daughters
The bone and blood of living water
And though Grandpa's hands have gone to dust
Like Grandma's pump, reduced to rust
Their story quenches (my) soul and mind
Like water from another time

Chorus

F C G7 C F C
New-mown hay on a July morn Grandkids running through the knee-high corn
G7 C F C G7
Sunburnt nose and a scabbed-up knee From a rope on the white oak tree A-
C F C C/B Dm
nother summer's day on Grand - pa's farm with Grandma's bucket hanging off my
F C
arm You know the old pump's rusty but it works fine Primed with
G7 C F C G7 C
water from another time It don't take much but you gotta have some The
G7 Am Am/G F C
old ways help the new ways come Just leave a little extra for the next in
F C G7 C
line (They're gonna need a little) water from another time

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To be released on forthcoming Rounder album, *Water From Another Time*.

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"Black Water"

Jean Ritchie

I began thinking about this song in the early sixties (even perhaps late fifties), shortly after strip-mining operations began on our mountain land in Viper, Kentucky. Like many other land-owners there, Grandpa Hall (Mom's dad) had sold his mineral rights in those very early days by signing the broadform deed; he later claimed that the deed he had been given had somehow been switched to the more comprehensive one which listed all minerals below the surface, present and future, in addition to coal. Underground mines were all that were foreseen at that time. He was paid fifty cents an acre. I didn't know about all this when the stripping began on our mountaintop and the first "black waters" began to run down and pollute the clear stream of our hollow. It was just a great sadness to see the stream die: minnows, crawdads, "grampuses," water snakes, all disappeared and when the branch wasn't running black, rusty or red, it was silted and slimy with algae. It was as though a dear friend had died."

— Jean Ritchie

I come from the mountains, Kentucky's my home,
Where the wild deer and the black bear so lately did roam;
By cool rushing waterfalls the wildflowers dream,
And through every valley there runs a clear stream.
Now there's scenes of destruction on every hand,
And there's only black waters run down through my land.

Chorus
Sad scenes of destruction on every hand;
Black waters, black waters, run down through the land.

O the quail, she's a pretty bird, she sings a sweet tongue;
In the roots of tall timbers she nests with her young.
But the hillside explodes with the dynamite's roar,
And the voices of the small birds will sound there no more;
And the hillsides come a-sliding so awful and grand,
And the flooding black waters rise over my land.

Chorus
In the rising of the springtime we planted our corn,
In the ending of the springtime we buried a son,
In summer come a nice man, said, "Everything's fine—
My employer just requires a way to his mine"—
Then they threw down my mountain and covered my corn,
And the grave on the hillside's a mile deeper down,
And the man stands and talks with his hat in his hand
As the poisonous water spreads over my land.

Chorus
Well, I ain't got no money and not much of a home;
I own my own land, but my land's not my own.
But if I had ten million—somewheres thereabouts—
I'd buy Perry County and I'd run them all out!
Set down on the bank with my bait in my can,
And just watch the clear waters run down through my land!

Chorus
Well, wouldn't that be like the old Promised Land?
Black water, black waters no more in my land!

Jean Ritchie, copyright 1967, 1971, Geordie Music Publishing. Published in *Celebration Of Life*, Geordie Music Publishing, 1971, recorded on "None But One", Sire SA 7530; reissued as Greenhays GR 708, copyright 1981. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission.

"High Hills And Mountains"

Jean Ritchie

"Hills and Mountains" was in my mind for a long time. On my parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary, June 20, 1944, Mom told us all, again, of her wedding day, how she had risen before day and crossed the little North Fork of the Kentucky River at the shoal to the mountain over which the sun comes up, and gathered a big armload of rhododendrons to carry when she stood up in her father's yard to be married to Balis Ritchie. She was seventeen, with brown eyes and long brown hair, and she had first told me that story when I was seventeen, so I carried that image of her in my heart and always thought that somebody should write a song about that. On the fiftieth anniversary day, after the re-telling, the thought came to me that maybe I could write that song, and I started with the second verse, the one about her gathering the flowers. I wrote the verse down and forgot about it, but I'd think about it whenever I'd see Mom and Dad. But I was bashful about it and never told anyone. Just before their sixtieth anniversary I wrote the first and third verses and the chorus, and sang it for them.

— Jean Ritchie

There's a place on this earth that is dearer to me
than all of the cities of pleasure,
Where Kentucky's old Northfork comes singing along
On the banks of that little green river.
There's an old square log cabin with a garden all around;
There's a pig and some chickens and a rusty old hound;
And when he's not a-sleeping, his sweet bugle sound
Goes ringing the high hills all over.

Chorus

Oh, Eastern Kentucky, your people so kind,
Your high hills and mountains always on my mind;
And when I turn homeward, my heart breaks in song,
The high hills and mountains are where I belong.

There a beautiful maiden went walking one day,
Pulled wild rhododendrons for a wedding bouquet;
Then she married her sweetheart in the garden that day,
And the branch-waters sang like a fountain.
That was Papa and Mama, they both worked so hard,
And they raised thirteen children in the fear of the Lord;
And the old songs we sang for our day's work's reward
Went ringing the high hills all over.

Chorus
In search of a living we've left our poor land,
Scattered over this country like seeds in the wind.
And I search and I labor God's purpose to find
And I'm safe in His love all-surrounding.
But more and more urgent the memories call,
As the years swift and swifter unceasingly roll,
To return to the high hills and mountains.

Chorus

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"Early Fields"

Jean Ritchie

This is a "summing-up"song. I have written a few poems throughout my life, but hesitate to call myself A Poet. Most of my poems get set to music, since it is easier for me to present them in that form. So, "Early Fields" was written first as a poem, around 1973 or 1974, when I was beginning to feel my years in my middle fifties. I like the poem, and wanted to share it with my friends. Having not many opportunities nor much inclination to simply read or recite my poem, I started hunting around for a tune to suit it, and settled on one loosely based upon another well-loved song, "How Can I Keeping From Singing?" I revised my poem to fit itself into the music and began singing it, mostly to myself over the broom and dishpan, but occasionally I'd have the courage to sing it for other folks. It took courage because it was quite different from my usual traditional or traditional-sounding songs; it was also my own statement, my own craftsmanship, and I had the usual qualms —maybe it wasn't good enough to perform in public; maybe it'll be laughed at, or rejected. Possible one of the highpoints of my life, then, was when someone in an audience in San Francisco a few years ago called out a request for "One Clear Voice." I was speechless with gratitude to that person! Not only had he *liked* my song/poem, he had identified it to me by its core thought instead of the given title; and this I consider a compliment to the song, as this king of re-titling often occurs when people really like a poem, or song, or story. I still call it "Early Fields" officially, and I sometimes use it for a closing song at my concerts, when I really like the audience.

— Jean Ritchie

As I walked over the early fields,
I heard a song a-bornin'.
It fell around me like the rain
That washes off the mornin'.

Chorus
O I love the pipes and I love the drum
I love the wild harp ringing:
But there's naught on earth that e'er match the sound
of one clear voice, singing.

So far away, the words were dim,
And yet I knew their sadness;
I knew their peace, I knew their pain,
I knew their joy and gladness.

Chorus
And still I walk my fields in vain
As evening shadows linger;
But a better journey I have had
In searching for the singer.

Chorus

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AT THE OLD TIME FIDDLERS' CONVENTION

text and photos by Joyce Duncan

During the first weekend in April, the placid antebellum city of Clarksville in middle Tennessee is transformed by a foot-stompin', hand-clappin' melee. The Dunn Center of Austin Peay State University vibrates as competitors tune up for the annual Old Time Fiddlers' Convention.

Pickin' and grinnin', old time style, warmed 8,000 hearts as this year's 12th Annual Competition got underway. More than 500 contestants, from all walks of life and all regions of the country, warmed up their banjos and fiddles, tuned their mandolins and dulcimers and put on their clogging shoes. The official competition was on stage but the music was everywhere, in the halls, the alcoves, the stairways . . . a nonstop 48-hour jam session. One performer quipped that the best sounds could be found in the men's room "cause, man, the acoustics are great."

Performers compete in 14 categories and are judged on rhythm, creativity and authenticity. No electric instruments are allowed; according to organizer Bob Frost, the festival is held to preserve our nation's earlier musical heritage. All proceeds go to a music scholarship fund at Austin Peay.

The melody flooded the building but it was the harmony that filled the hearts. The event synthesized a cornucopia of people into one . . . bonded together, in fellowship, by a common love of music. A realtor from Georgia stood arm-in-arm with an attorney from New Jersey and an aging, long-haired ex-radical from Middle Tennessee: each, for once, swaying to the music of the same fiddler.

Variations On The Theme: A Reminiscence

Rubye Fowler

My grandmother enjoyed playing the piano as much as she enjoyed cooking, and she entertained me by doing both when my parents and I visited the farm in Tennessee each summer. My mother, who sometimes practiced amateur psychology, said that cooking was grandma's way of showing affection for her family. Spending time with me at the piano was her way of showing affection for me. We had our own private time after breakfast when the dishes were washed and the table set for dinner. It was breakfast, dinner and supper. Lunch was something you carried in a brown paper bag. Grandma played only church hymns and she taught me the easy ones.

"How did you learn to play the piano so well"? I asked her one day.

"Well," she said, "my sisters and I wanted an organ more than anything in the world when I was growing up. Papa told us that if we would help him take peddlin' loads to the mining camps at Copperhill, he would pay us and we could save the money to buy an organ. We would take turns going with him the six miles to Copperhill and help sell. One day we took in forty-six dollars. The sulphur fumes from the copper smelting had killed most of the vegetation around the camps, and the housewives were eager to get fresh produce. We would load the wagon the night before with corn, beans, watermelons, potatoes, apples, tomatoes, cucumbers, turnip greens and blackberries. If the weather wasn't too hot, we would take butter, eggs and dressed chickens. We'd pack a lunch of biscuits, ham, and fried pies and stop at a spring about half way to eat and rest the mules. By noon, we would have sold everything, and then we would go to the company store to buy staples and always a dime's worth of cheese and crackers, which was a lot of cheese and crackers in those days. I wish cheese tasted like that today. When I was about sixteen, we had enough money to get the organ, which we ordered from Sears & Roebuck out of Atlanta. It cost fifty dollars and was shipped to the L & N depot at Farner, Tennessee. Finally the organ came, and we went to get it with the mules and wagon."

"But you didn't just play it the first day it came, did you?" I asked.

"Oh no, by that time I had a beau who knew how to play. His name was Edgar Ledford, and he taught me how to chord. It was just natural for me to play the melody with the right hand. I could play anything after I heard it a time or two."

Talent sometimes comes in strange packages, I thought.

She continued, "None of my sisters learned how to play. I taught myself how to read music after I went to Blue Ridge, Georgia, to live with my brother and work for the telephone company. They called me the "hello girl." She chuckled. "Bet you'd like to hear some of the songs we sang when I was a girl."

Grandma was enjoying having an audience. She began to play and sing, and I sat enthralled.

I'll deck my brow with roses
the loved one may be there
the flowers that others gave me
will shine upon my hair
I'll be all smiles tonight dear
I'll be all smiles tonight
though my heart may break tomorrow
I'll be all smiles tonight
And when the room he enters
his bride upon his arm, I'll smile

"If I hadn't gotten married and had four young'uns, I'd be as famous as Mama Maybelle," she said.

"And I'd be a big league baseball player," Grandpa said as he came through the room.

"Go to the garden and get a dozen ears of the very best corn. Becky wants some for dinner," she shot back.

I hadn't mentioned the corn, but she knew how to handle Grandpa.

"And don't slam that screen door," she added. "You'll break the hinges."

This kind of nagging bothered no one. Mother said it was just a game that old people, who have lived together a long time, played.

"Sing another song," I begged.

She played a few bars and then began to sing:

Once I had a charming beau.
I loved him dear as life.
I thought the time would surely come
That I would be his wife.
His pockets were filled with gold.
And Oh, he cut a dash,
With a diamond ring, a watch and chain,
and a darling black mustache.
Every time I think of him, my heart beats
quick and fast.
that little black mustache, that little black
mustache.
But you must know, I lost my beau with the little
black mustache.

One day there came a sour old maid,
Who owned her weight in gold.
She wore false teeth and had false hair,
And was forty-five years old.
The cruel lad deserted me
Just for the old maid's cash,
And now you know I lost my beau
With the darling black mustache.

"I wish I could remember the other verses," she said.

"Grandma, did Edgar Ledford have a black mustache?" I asked.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, he did. He drove a horse and buggy, and how he liked to have those wheels rolling under him! He would come by on Sunday and take me to church, where he played the organ. All the girls envied me. My hair was black as coal and so long that I could sit on it."

I looked skeptically at her short, grey permanent.

"I'd better put the chicken on to fry, or we won't have dinner by the time the mailman comes," Grandma said, heading for the kitchen.

I sat on the breeze porch with my grandfather and watched for the mail. It was a ritual we observed each day. There was always the *Knoxville Journal* and an occasional letter from relatives who had moved to Detroit, St. Louis, or Florida, and once a month the

Social Security check. My grandmother liked to brag about her brother, Burley, who with only a fourth grade education, became superintendent of a big electric power plant near St. Louis. Grandpa always reminded her that his grandfather was a sergeant in the Confederate Army, and he treasured some letters written by his grandfather from camps in Georgia and Kentucky.

We spotted the mailman's dusty car up the highway, and I went along to the mail box to help carry the mail.

"You're late today—been playing post office with the widow"? Grandpa joked. The mailman looked annoyed.

My grandparents, who had a hard time during the depression, were now enjoying a measure of prosperity. Grandpa had retired from public works and they had sold most of the farm to the Beauknit Manufacturing Company. The huge plant now loomed like an intruder back near the railroad tracks where we used to go for Christmas trees.

"I hope some of that Yankee money will pay your way through college," Grandpa told me one day.

After dinner, my parents went upstairs. My mother was writing a short story and Daddy was editing a book. My grandparents went to take naps. I stretched out on the living room couch and began reading a book by Mary Southworth that I found in an old trunk upstairs. Grandma said she used to like to read those "dime novels" before she got religion. After a while, I opened up the piano bench and found some ragged sheet music. I always was a bit nosy at my grandparents' house.

I had a piece of music ready for Grandma to play when she finished her nap. It was variations on the theme "In The Sweet Bye And Bye." She played a few bars and then really went to town. She crossed her hands and played the theme on the treble notes and then on the bass. The piano had once been a player piano, and the tone was loud and brassy. It was better than the records my friend Vanda and I danced to back home. I got up and started clapping my hands and doing some dance steps.

Buna Hicks and daughter Hattie Presnell, Beech Mountain, North Carolina. Courtesy Thomas G. Burton.

My grandpa came out of his room and said: "Stop that foolishness. I want to turn on the radio and see if it's going to rain. If it doesn't rain pretty soon, the popcorn is going to start popping right in the field."

Mother served us some iced tea on the breeze porch while we sat and watched the traffic on Highway 411—families going to and from the Smokies, Greyhound buses, and big semis hauling fruit from Florida.

Grandma picked up the newspaper and started reading the obituaries aloud. I couldn't understand why anyone would be interested in death, so I went out in the yard to watch the cows. Two of them were chewing their cuds under the big pine tree, but something was happening to one down by the watering pond.

I ran to the house and yelled: "Grandpa, come quick, there's something wrong with Pet."

He got up from his rocker and followed me to the fence. "Oh, she's just having a calf. I thought it was about time for her to freshen," he said. "Let's not bother her unless she needs us."

"Can I watch?" I asked.

"Sure, why not?" he said and went off to the barn.

I watched in fascination as a plastic-looking sack dropped to the ground and a cute calf appeared from the mess. Pet busied herself with cleaning up the calf. Blackie and Sue appeared concerned. After the wobbly calf stood up and began nuzzling its mother, the other cows ambled over and took a look. I could just hear them saying: "Looks just like his father, doesn't he?" then they went back to the shade of the pine tree.

The next day was Sunday, and we were still at breakfast when the phone rang. Grandma answered it, and I heard her say: "Yes, I can make it. I've got company, but I'll be there." She hung up the phone and began to snap orders.

"Dad, call the Armstrongs and ask them to give you a ride into town to church. I am going to play the piano at Mars Hill Church. The pianist is sick. And if they stop at Kroger's, you go in and get some ice cream to go with the blackberry cobbler. Becky, I want you to go with me. I'd like to show off my smart granddaughter."

I didn't really want to go and I looked to my mom for help, but she just nodded her approval. Anyway, no one argued with my grandmother. My mother was given final instructions for dinner, which was already underway, and Grandma disappeared into her room to get ready. I wondered why it was taking her so long. I put on my pink organdy recital dress and black Mary Jane pumps and settled down with the Sunday comics.

When she appeared, she had shed the mu mu that she wore like an outer skin and even slept in—in case of fire or the resurrection. She had one for each day in the week all made by the same pattern. Now, the voile dress that we had given her for her sixty-fifth birthday had transformed her. She wore a trace of rouge and powder but no lipstick. She handed me a lace-edged handkerchief with a quarter tied in the corner and said: "Be sure and put the money in the collection plate." As if I didn't know what to do with it!

My grandmother had learned to drive after she was fifty, so she backed the 1942 Ford out of the garage very carefully and eased down the driveway. She pulled on to the highway with the back wheels throwing gravel. We drove about two miles and turned right on a dirt road. Soon we were at a little white country church. A few pick-ups and old model Fords and Chevies were already parked under the big trees. Grandma chose a spot near the road and headed the car for a quick get-a-away.

She went into the church to help the minister pick out the songs, and I wandered through the old cemetery on one side of the church reading the inscriptions on the tombstones. Plastic flowers had been put on some of the graves for Memorial Day. I felt bad about the ones with no flowers.

Bonnie and Infant Son
Wife of Frank Williams
Born 1907 Died 1932

Not Evening But Dawn

Asleep With Jesus

Rest In Peace

The church bell rang and I hurried inside. Grandma introduced me to a freckled-face girl and asked her to look after me. I looked across the aisle where some teen-aged boys were sitting and one of them winked at me. I quickly looked away and felt my neck and face getting red. So that's what they call a hot flash, I thought.

I didn't understand what the minister was saying about God's will and the Holy Spirit, so I turned through the song book looking for songs I knew.

After ages, the minister made his closing remarks and said: "For our closing hymn, let's turn to number 78 and make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Stand, and one verse, please,"

"In the sweet bye and bye, we shall meet on that beautiful shore," the congregation sang lackadaisically. The minister raised his arms for the benediction, but Grandma started playing variations on the theme "In The Sweet Bye and Bye." The people stood, as if frozen, for a few seconds. Then the teen-aged boys began clapping in rhythm and the girls joined in. Someone shouted "Praise the Lord," and another called out, "Glory to God." "Amen, Amen," came from the pulpit. The minister again raised his arms for the benediction, but everyone was laughing and hugging each other. Grandma played on. After a while, people began drifting out and Grandma stopped playing. She had a look on her face like the cat that ate the cream.

"How was church"? my dad asked after we had filled our plates at dinner. "Great," I said. "Grandma really jazzed it up." "Oh no, not Variations on 'The Sweet Bye and Bye'," my mother gasped. "Yes," I said gleefully.

My grandfather died while I was in college. Grandmother followed three years later after only six months in the nursing home she had declared she would never enter. I was in Europe with the husband I had met in college.

I did get back in the summer in time to go with my mother to clean out the house, which had gone to Beauknit along with the rest of the land. It was hard to decide what to keep and what to throw away.

It took us two days to finish and when we got into the loaded car to leave, I looked back and wished that I had asked my grandmother about her parents and grandparents; what had happened to Edgar Ledford; how she had happened to marry Grandpa; who were the people in the old pictures we decided not to keep; and I wished that I had written down the words to the old songs she sang for me.

Twenty years, two husbands and two children later, I was flying back to Michigan from Miami when I decided to make a quick stopover in Knoxville, rent a car, and see what had happened to my grandparents' house. It was only forty miles in a bee line from the airport. I was there in no time. I drove up the familiar drive, but the house was gone. Where it had stood lay a wide asphalt road leading to still another big plant.

At the filling station across the highway, I learned what had happened. After the plant had been sold to Johns-Manville Corporation, the house was given to one of the employees and he moved it to the Mars Hill Subdivision. I knew where to go and found it. I recognized it only by the dormer windows. The front porch and big white columns were gone, as well as the breezeway and attached garage. It looked so much smaller than I remembered. The remains had been covered with aluminum siding and it had the same generic look of the other houses in the subdivision. I felt as if my birthright had been snatched from me and I wanted to cry.

By now it was dusk. Music was coming from my grandparents' big living room. I knew it ws useless to knock, for I wouldn't be heard. I made a feline stroll to the front window. Inside, a girl with long black hair, wearing an ankle length skirt and a white shirt waist with a high lace collar, was sitting on a stool singing into a mike. A man wearing a derby hat and a white shirt was playing an electronic keyboard. His sleeves were pushed up with red garters. Yes, of course, he had a little black mustache. A shiver went down my spine. They were playing, "I'll deck my brow with roses, the loved one may be there." A blur of back-up musicians filled the room.

I no longer felt sad. I got into the car and drove away humming the tune and throwing gravel from the back tires as I pulled on to the highway.

Manuel, "Old Joe" Clark, banjo comic, at Renfro Valley Barn Dance. Courtesy James Sizemore.

Audience at WOPI Jamboree, Bristol, Tennessee, circa 1935. Courtesy Paul Culp, WOPI.

OUR NEXT TWO ISSUES WILL FEATURE BLACK APPALACHIANS (Winter)

Guest Editor: Ed Cabell

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Now and Then*, newsletter of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University, is published three times a year by the Center, Box 19180A, ETSU, Johnson City, Tenn. 37614-0002.*

Submissions of poetry, fiction, scholarly and personal essays, graphics and photographs concerned with Appalachian nature and culture are welcomed. Please address all submissions, and correspondence concerning them to the editor, Fred Waage, Box 24292, ETSU, Johnson City, Tenn. 37614-0002.

"Ray and Larry," radio performers, WOPI, Bristol, Tennessee, 1932. Courtesy Paul Culp, WOPI.

NOW AND THEN

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services/ Institute for Appalachian Affairs

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Johnson City, Tenn. 37614-0002

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